

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.



Wilberforce's Interview with John Newton. Page 4s.

THE CHRISTIAN STATESMAN.

M E M O I R S

OF

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

BY

MARY A. COLLIER.

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P R E F A C E .

TO INDICATE the sources from which this memorial has been drawn is hardly necessary. The very copious and minute biography and correspondence of Mr. Wilberforce, compiled by his sons, must of course furnish the material for whatever may be written of him.

To cull from the mass of detail those portions most illustrative of character, and, by weaving the whole into a continuous narrative, so to present it as to interest the youth of our own country and times, has been the aim of the writer.

In accomplishing this, a few other works, bearing directly upon the history of the period under review, have been incidentally consulted.

Boston, May 10th, 1855.



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I.

Early Life.

At the grammar-school in Hull, many years ago, a bright-looking boy used to be called upon by the teacher to read aloud to his companions. His seat was wont to be upon the table. The best reader in the school, the boys were accustomed to listen with pleasure to the clear tones of his silvery voice, which had power to charm them into unbroken attention. His elevated seat was provided on account of his extreme littleness, being at the time of which we speak only seven years old, and very slight and delicate even for that age.

Years passed away. The beloved pupil of the grammar-school grew to be a man, and instead of the hushed school-room, there

was the parliamentary hall ; instead of the earnest faces of the boys, there were the statesmen of England, and, even as the boys of old, would the members of the House of Commons hang with delight upon his words of eloquence and power. It was WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

His life, in its earlier and later days, we propose to sketch.

He was born at Hull, on the twenty-fourth day of August, 1759. His father was a merchant of that place. Of three sisters, two died in early life, the second only living to grow up. The talents so early shown by little William were adorned by a most lovely and loving disposition. Thoughtful of the wants of others, one person, often a visitor at his mother's and an invalid, tells us that the gentle and pleasant boy, who used to take off his shoes at the door of the sick chamber, lest he should make a noise in crossing the room, is well remembered. How gently, too, he would put aside the curtains,

and with anxious face ask, "*if I was better,* I shall never forget."

When William was nine years old, his father died, and he was sent to live with his uncle, whose name he bore. The residence of this gentleman was in a pleasant mansion at Wimbledon, near London.

Soon after this, the future statesman was put to a boarding-school, of which little is recorded save that the master wore a long, red beard, and the food given to the boys was very unfit to be eaten. The advantages bestowed upon children at that time, more than eighty years ago, are by no means to be measured by those enjoyed at present. Though the friends of young Wilberforce were wealthy, he seems at this time to have enjoyed but little in the way of acquiring knowledge. He was, however, regarded with much kindness and love. An instance of this we find recorded. His aunt with whom he now lived had a brother, whose name is still well known in the records of piety—

John Thornton. This gentleman sent on one occasion to the favorite of his sister a present of some money. There was more than a boy of his age could want to spend, and Mr. Thornton, in giving it, had intimated that a part of it was for the poor. Afterward, when the name of Wilberforce had become famous as a great and good man, and a most generous-hearted Christian, he remembered the gift of Mr. Thornton with pleasure, not for the money which he had laid out for himself, but because he had by this been taught to “remember the poor.”

Up to his ninth year, no peculiar care seems to have been taken to instruct him in religion. When, however, he came to live with his uncle, this want of his education existed no longer. His aunt, the sister of the excellent John Thornton, by the warmth of her religious zeal made up for the previous neglect.

Great kindness was lavished by her upon the pleasant child who had been committed

to her care and dwelt beneath her roof. The namesake of his uncle and his presumptive heir, he appears to have been regarded by these relatives as their own.

The celebrated Whitefield, though near the close of his career, was, at the time of which we speak, preaching in London and in other parts of England. Immense crowds still followed him. Mrs. Wilberforce loved the ministry of Whitefield. She had also many friends among his followers, who were her occasional guests. It pleased her well, no doubt, that her active and affectionate young nephew became strongly attached to religious society. It is recorded of him that "a rare and pleasing character of piety marked his twelfth year."

But his friends at Hull were by no means pleased with this new influence. His mother repaired to London, and, removing him from his uncle's house, he saw no more of his aunt's religious friends. Of his uncle and aunt, he says, "I deeply felt the parting, for

I loved them as parents ; indeed I was almost heart-broken at the separation." To his uncle he wrote, "I can never forget you as long as I live."

Being removed to his mother's house, he was soon surrounded by young companions, who introduced him to places of public amusement. At first he held back—these pleasures were by no means to his taste—the contrast was too painful with the more staid and quiet domestic scenes of his Wimbledon home. When first taken to the theater it was much against his will. In a manuscript written by himself in later years, he speaks of this period of his life, and of the social influences of his native town. "It was then as gay a place as could be found out of London. The theater, balls, great suppers, and card parties were the delight of the principal families in the town. The usual dinner hour was two o'clock, and at six they met at sumptuous suppers. This mode of life was at first distressing to me ;

but by degrees I acquired a relish for it, and became as thoughtless as the rest. As grandson to one of the principal inhabitants, I was every where invited and caressed."

He appeared at this time to those about him a lovely and promising youth. Intelligent far beyond his years, gentle, refined in his thoughts and expressions, full of spirits and a flow of wit which, however sharply pointed it might be, was never unkind.

To these social qualities he added an enthusiastic taste for music, and a voice and style of singing which made him much sought after by the pleasure-loving youth of Hull. In after years, when he had become an inhabitant of London, the Prince of Wales expressed his admiration of this gift. "We must have you again," writes a friend; "the Prince says he will come any time to hear you sing."

From the time of his return to Hull, all through his years of early life, was young Wilberforce the favorite of society. Much,

in those years when the character is forming, and time is precious, and knowledge must be acquired, was wasted in a round of visits. Of the effect of this he has himself told us. His religious impressions disappeared, and he became as fond of gayety as his companions.

Alas, for the ingenuous boy, whose heart had so glowed with sympathetic joy when in the company of the pious, and about whose future way such holy hopes had clustered !

Yet amid all these temptations his heavenly Father had still a care over him. Though a lover of pleasure, he was kept from falling into vice ; and notwithstanding the dissipations of Hull, the gayeties of his home, the laxity of school discipline, he still loved his books, and excelled his companions in scholarship.

By the death of his grandfather, young Wilberforce came into the possession of an independent fortune. By the decease of his uncle, this was still further increased. Deprived thus of his nearest male relatives, he

became at an early age his own master, with a larger income than he could spend, his mother being his sole guardian. Under these circumstances he became a member of St. John's College, Cambridge. On first entering here he encountered a set of worthless and vicious companions. "They drank hard," he says of them, "and their conversation was even worse than their lives." From evil in so gross and disgusting a form his mind recoiled. After a period he shook them off, and found companions of higher character and more intellectual pursuits. Among this selecter circle was one—the Rev. Thomas Gisborne—with whom friendship was continued in after life, and who has given some recollection of college days. "There was no one," says he, "at all like him (Wilberforce) for powers of entertainment. Always fond of repartee and discussion, he seemed entirely free from conceit and vanity." The hospitality that marked his after life may have had its beginning

in college. "There was," says the same, "always a great Yorkshire pie in his rooms, of which all were welcome to partake. My rooms and his were back to back, and often when I was raking out my fire at ten o'clock, I heard his melodious voice calling out to me to come and sit with him before I went to bed."

Still in after life he was accustomed to regret his *wasted years*. Speaking of the Fellows of the college, with whom he was wont to associate a great deal, he speaks with strong disapproval of the part they acted toward him. "Why in the world," they would say, "should a man of your fortune trouble himself with fagging?" Again he says: "While my companions were reading hard and studying, card parties and amusements consumed my time. The tutors would often say in my hearing that '*they* were mere saps; that I did all by talent.'" Well might he add, on recurring to this

period of his life, "This was poison to a mind constituted like mine."

Though much time was thus dissipated, his love of study was not wholly lost. Surely God watched over him, or he would have been swallowed up by these influences so adverse to good. But though with persons on all sides to flatter and lead astray, he was mercifully kept from ruin. In after years, when he had learned that for wasted hours we must give account to God, he strove diligently to make up for this loss by study, by method, by strict, persevering effort. He became a great as well as a good man. He won a name that will not die; and still as mankind grow better shall his fame brighten and increase. His history has this peculiarity, that for *greatness* as well as goodness he is indebted to religious principles received into the heart and governing the life. That unceasing toil that marked his public life and led him on to efforts for human weal, eventuating in splendor and success, could

have been inspired in a mind like his, only by the love of God and the desire to please him. What else could have given *oneness* of effort and aim to a mind which, gifted indeed with extraordinary powers, had yet, along with the strength of genius, its weakness too? Yes, but for this great principle moving upon his mind and heart, and concentrating all its powers in a perfect bond, the world would never have hailed his name as one of the benefactors of his race; his voice would never have been so perseveringly lifted for the oppressed; the orator of the British Parliament might have been feasted with transient fame, and then have sunk into his grave to be forgotten. The great and gay world stood ready to absorb his existence; his playful fancy and pointed wit made him the life of the festal scene; his mind, as the sunbeam of summer on the glancing wave, was ever on the wing in quest of new scenes and new pleasures.

The great principle of duty to God, of

serving him by blessing his creatures, could alone have given so elevated, so sublime a direction to those powers, so brilliant yet so volatile, so much in danger of being enlisted in the service of folly.

The Almighty had assigned him a work, and in his own time called him to its performance.

II.

Temptations in London.

WHILE still at college, Wilberforce had resolved to enter upon public life. His active mind sought an object for the employment of its powers which he could not find in that round of pleasure which his ample fortune, his lively temper and fascinating social powers opened before him. "I was," he says of himself, "at that time very ambitious." Moreover he had, while at college, formed an acquaintance with the younger son of Lord Chatham, afterward the sharer of his father's fame, the celebrated William Pitt. That this acquaintance had influenced his choice we are not sure ; certain it is, however, that the two were afterward linked in the closest bonds of friendship.

Wilberforce was chosen a representative for his native town, as early as 1780. The war of the American Revolution had not yet closed, and, following in the steps of the great Earl of Chatham, he took his place in parliament as an opponent of the policy which had dictated the war. Mr. Pitt came rapidly into power. His unmatched abilities were recognized by his sovereign, and at twenty-four he became the prime-minister of George the Third.

These two young statesmen, destined to wield, in different ways, so important an influence in the counsels of the nation, seem to have regarded each other with the affection of brothers. Wilberforce says of his friend Pitt, "He was the wittiest man I ever knew, and, what was quite peculiar to himself, had at all times his wit under entire control. Every possible combination of ideas seemed always present to his mind, and he could at all times produce whatever he desired."

In London, as at Hull and Cambridge, Wilberforce was the favorite, and had nearly been the victim of "society." "I belonged at this time," he says, "to five clubs. Nothing could be more luxurious than the style of these. Fox, Sheridan, Fitzpatrick, and all your leading men frequented them, and associated upon the easiest terms; you chatted, played at cards, or gambled as you pleased!"

Among these associations, there was one which was preferred to all the rest, as a resort. This was "on the premises of a man named Goosetree." It consisted of only twenty-five members, most of whom were young men who had passed through the university together, and had also entered upon public life. "We played a good deal at Goosetree's," writes Wilberforce. He then records the eagerness with which his friend Pitt entered into the amusements of the gaming-table, and his sudden abandonment of them. The clear, strong glance

of the great statesman revealed to himself the danger that lurked beneath these excitements, and, spurning the fetters which were fit only for weaker minds, he threw them aside for ever.

With this same vice Wilberforce was very nearly insnared. He quitted the practice for a reason which well illustrates the gentle spirit which through life, in boyhood, in manhood, and even to old age, made him so beloved. Having on one occasion risen from the table, the winner of several hundred pounds, he was so much troubled at the thought of the losers, of their disappointment and chagrin, that his success gave him no pleasure. The pain he felt on their account went far to cure him of a habit at once so debasing and ruinous.

Notwithstanding his gayety and love of pleasure, Mr. Wilberforce was from the first a close attendant to business, and esteemed an active member of Parliament. He did not at once become a speaker. "Attend to

business," he said in later life, to a friend about to enter the House of Commons, "and do not seek occasions for display ; if you have a turn for speaking, the proper time will come."

His first speech was on the 17th of May, 1781, in behalf of his native town, from which he presented a petition. He then forcibly attacked the laws of revenue, as they existed, as oppressive and unjust.

His leisure during the recess of Parliament was spent in the country. Passionately attached to the beauties of nature, possessing that taste which finds delight among woods and winding streams, he rented a house on the banks of the Windermere, and amid this pleasant scenery, with "a goodly assortment of books," he was wont to seek for happiness in the intervals of business. Retirement with him, however, was not solitude. Beside his mother and sister, to whom he was tenderly attached, his intimate friends often took up their abode under his roof.

His uncle's house at Wimbledon, where he had passed so happy a portion of his childhood, was also now his own, and he had, by a trifling alteration, eight or nine bedrooms to spare to his friends. So close an intimacy now subsisted between "Pitt and his friend Wilberforce," that the former appears to have taken quarters at Wimbledon whenever he chose, making himself equally at home in the presence and absence of its master.

"Eliot, Arden and I," writes Pitt one summer afternoon, "will be with you before curfew, and expect an early meal of peas and strawberries."

This point of time, with all its varied objects of interest, was a most critical one in the life of Wilberforce. His manners so sure to please, his peculiar and sparkling wit, his buoyant and kindly spirit, won for him such a share of applause as is seldom borne without injury. Many, alas ! with far less tempt-

ation, have stumbled upon dark mountains, and have fallen to rise no more.

Prone to exercise a most diverting talent for mimicry, but for the "kindly severity" of an elderly friend, (Lord Camden,) he might have valued too highly this power, by the exercise of which he was wont to "set the table in a roar." "'Tis but a vulgar accomplishment," said the old lord slightly, when solicited to witness its display. The remark met the ear of Wilberforce, and his better judgment told him that it was true.

To the allurements of pleasure were added those of ambition. Of the supreme power of this latter over the minds of many in public life, we have an illustration in the club of the "Independents." It consisted of members of the House of Commons, forty in number, of which Wilberforce was one. The bond that held them together was the formal resolve, to accept of neither "place, pension, nor peerage." After a lapse of years, so far had time and circumstances moderated the

heroism of their independence, that Mr. Wilberforce and one other, Mr. Bankes, alone retained their original station. Of the county members Wilberforce was the only one who was not raised to the peerage. The attainment of a title was to him not without its charms, and he had come into public life under most favorable circumstances. His own personal qualities, and the friendship of the foremost man in the nation, seemed to open to him a brilliant career. So prevalent at one time was the opinion that he was to be raised to the upper House, that he received various applications for the supply of his robes for that occasion. But his position was an independent one, and neither to ambition nor friendship would he unreservedly yield its advantage. "I well remember," he says long after, "the pain I felt in being obliged to vote against Pitt, the second time he spoke in Parliament." The wish for a name among the titled nobility of the land was in the end supplanted by the prevalence

of that sacred principle, which reveals "a better country," and makes the honors of this world grow little indeed by contrast. The mingled good sense and piety with which he writes on this subject, in his maturer years, is beyond all praise.

About this time (1783) we find Pitt, Wilberforce, and another friend, (Eliot,) making a journey into France, where they met with divers adventures. At Paris they became acquainted with La Fayette. They were by him presented to Doctor Franklin, who cordially greeted Mr. Wilberforce, as "a rising member of the House of Parliament, who had opposed the war with America."

From these scenes of pleasure and interest a special messenger recalled Mr. Pitt to London, and Wilberforce followed him about six weeks later. The month immediately following was a period of great political commotions.

A strong opposition to the measures of the government existed in the House of Com-

mons. Mr. Fox, aided by his friend Lord North, opposed Mr. Pitt, who was now the Premier of the realm. Illustrious for talent, eloquence, and noble birth, the opposition looked with scorn upon the youth of twenty-four, who dared to take the political field against them. This trial made manifest to all, the unequalled powers of the prime minister. Undismayed he upheld the government, and, by the strength of his own mighty mind, swayed the conflicting wills of others. Of the private counsels as well as the public labors of this great statesman, Wilberforce was the sharer. But the onward course of events was such, that his power to uphold the administration of Pitt was soon to receive a ten-fold increase.

Yorkshire, the largest county in England, with regard to the question at issue had not yet declared itself. In this country were situated the landed estates of Wilberforce. He had however no residence there, and was personally unknown. Thither he repaired, to

sustain the cause of the government to which he had committed himself, and of which his friend was the leader.

At an immense gathering in the castle yard in the city of York, Wilberforce was present. Addresses had been listened to from speakers on both sides, the day was "cold and hail falling," the people weary and about to separate. Under these unfavorable circumstances he addressed the assemblage. Touched by the charms of his eloquence, the people were held for more than an hour, notwithstanding cold and storm and weariness. The beauty and grace of his oratory were irresistible. While serving the cause which he had espoused, he won hearts for himself, and before he had ceased to speak, the words were whispered in the crowd, "We'll have this man for our county member!"

That in his young aspirations he had entertained this very idea, he himself has informed us. Aware, however, that it might

be deemed the madness of ambition, he had never mentioned it. Perhaps he was as much surprised at his success as were his friends. Congratulations poured in upon him. "Danby tells me," writes one, "that you spoke like an angel."

The whole was the more remarkable on account of his youth, and the circumstance of his having no influential friends in the county. He found himself, on the strength of his personal qualities, the force of talent and eloquence, and honest devotion to the public service, chosen by the people to the important position of a representative of "a tenth of England." The opposition party of the House of Commons was overcome. The supporters of the administration, the friends of Pitt, had triumphed on every side. Wilberforce saw his friend strong in the heart of the nation, as well as in the House of Parliament.

And now on the very top wave of earthly glory we see these two noble and gifted

youth, with all that the world can give of honor and pleasure soliciting their acceptance. But "it is not all of life to live," and in a future chapter we will unfold events of deeper and sublimer interest.

III.

The Great Change.

VERY soon after the stirring events just detailed, we find Mr. Wilberforce about to set out on a second Continental tour. His companions were his mother and sister, and two young cousins, who were invalids. He speaks of the latter as "very good girls, whose health we hope to reëstablish by a change of air."

He was accompanied also by his friend Isaac Milner, at that time a tutor at Cambridge. The ladies occupied one carriage, and in another rode Wilberforce and Milner. The latter held religious views of a far more decided character than he was wont to manifest. Like many others, this Cambridge tutor seems to have had the habit of hiding

away his most solemn perceptions of divine truth, so that when on one occasion they came to be decidedly expressed, Wilberforce was taken by surprise. Had he been aware of the religious character of Milner, so far was he from any desire for such intercourse, that he himself afterward declared, he should never have chosen his company in these travels.

Religious topics, however, once introduced, were frequently discussed by the two. In argument Wilberforce would sometimes get the better of the other. While Milner treated the subject with becoming reverence, his more lively companion would use his own peculiar power of quick and apt reply, to set aside the arguments that were brought forward. "I am no match for you, Wilberforce, in this running fire," Milner would reply; "but if you really wish to discuss these subjects seriously, I will gladly enter upon them with you."

They traveled into Italy, and having halt-

ed for a time at the ancient town of Nice, were about to turn their steps homeward.

“What sort of a book is this?” said Wilberforce, as he casually took up a small volume, belonging to one of their fellow travelers.

“It is one of the best books ever written,” replied Milner; “let us take it with us, and read it on our journey.”

This book was no other than Doddridge on the “Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.”

Life is like a panorama, and its scenes are continually shifting. The gay young member of the club at Goosetree’s, the orator whose subduing eloquence had so won the hearts of men under the shadow of the York Minster, the child of pleasure and ambition, is now seated in a traveling coach with his honest friend Milner, and together they are considering the great problem of man’s apostasy from God, and the deeper mystery of his return. They read “of sin, of righteous-

ness, of judgment," of the blessedness of communion with God, of the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Thoughtlessness is for the time banished, and raillery is dumb, and wit has laid aside her archery. The result of this reading was, that Wilberforce determined to examine the scriptures for himself.

The journey homeward was made with Milner alone. The ladies of the party were left behind to enjoy the soft airs of Italy, while political movements recalled the representative of Yorkshire to London.

The journey was not without its adventures. Leaving the sunny regions of Southern Europe behind them, they crossed the mountains amid the snows of winter. Having, on one occasion, climbed a steep and frozen road, the weight of the carriage overpowered the horses. They were only saved from plunging over a frightful precipice, by the great strength of Milner, who happened to be on foot in the rear of the carriage.

February 22d they reached London, and Wilberforce records in his journal, "Took up my quarters at Pitt's." Here he again became immersed in politics and society. The truths, in the study of which he had been engaged, had convinced his understanding, but had not yet power to induce the consecration of the soul to God. His former thoughtlessness had however been interrupted, and occasional traces of serious reflection may be gleaned from the journals of this winter.

The session of Parliament, though expected to terminate in May, lasted till the end of June. At the end of that time Wilberforce again started to meet the former party at Genoa, and again Milner was his companion. The Greek Testament was now the book they were wont to read together, examining carefully the doctrines contained within its pages. So interesting had these topics now become, that the ladies of the party complained of Wilberforce that he so seldom visited their carriage. His com-

panions little knew what was passing in his mind. His outward manner and appearance were not changed, but the great truths that had been impressed upon his mind had begun to take possession of his soul. He says of himself, "I had received into my understanding the great truths of the gospel, and believed that its offers were free and universal; and that God had promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for it." To this he adds a most important clause, which, from the nature of his habits and associates, possesses an added interest: "*I now began to pray earnestly.*"

Again he says, "As soon as I began to reflect on these subjects, the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colors, and I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, opportunities and talents."

In this state he returned home. An interval of three months before the assembling of Parliament gave him time for retirement and

meditation. This period he spent at Wimbledon. His impressions were thus deepened. "It was not so much," he writes, "the fear of punishment by which I was affected, as a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Saviour; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression from strong convictions of my guilt. Indeed nothing which I have ever read, in the accounts of others, exceeded what I then felt."

In a journal which he commenced about this time, we find the following, which reveals the dawning of Christian hope.

November 28, 1785: "I hope as long as I live to be the better for the meditation of this evening. It was on the sinfulness of my heart, its blindness and weakness. True, Lord, I am wretched and miserable and blind and naked. What infinite love, that Christ should die to save such a sinner, and how

necessary is it that He should save us altogether, that we may appear before God with nothing of our own ! God grant that I may not deceive myself in thinking I feel the beginnings of Gospel comfort."

To this, so full of self-renunciation and that poverty of spirit to which the Saviour has annexed his blessing, the journal adds : "Began this night constant family prayer, and resolved to have it morning and evening, and to read a chapter when time."

With a simplicity of spirit peculiarly his own, he adds, two days after : "Forgot to set down that when my servants came in the first time to family prayer, I felt ashamed."

He now began to feel the need of counsel. Hitherto the change in the inner man had been wrought in solitude, by the study of the Bible, by secret seeking after God. He now looked for converse with some other Christian. Sympathy he must have—to some other heart he must make known that which

so stirred the depths of his own. Not that his feelings had been wholly concealed. From his retreat he had written to some of his boon companions of his altered views of life. Especially did he feel that he owed this to his friend Pitt, and accordingly wrote to him fully of his changed views of spiritual subjects, and of the bearing of his religious principles upon political life.

This was frankly and nobly done. The manner in which it was received by the prime-minister had the effect to endear him still more to his friend. What so touches the sensitive heart of the young Christian as when to the story of the soul's new life his bosom friend listens with kindness, with respect, yet without sharing in its emotions? Such, in the retirement of Wimbledon, was the interview of Pitt and Wilberforce. "I had prayed," says the latter, as he records the interview, "to God, I hope with some sincerity, not to lead me into disputing for my own exaltation, but for his glory. Con-

versed with Pitt near two hours, and opened myself completely to him."

Much as Wilberforce felt at this crisis of his being in need of counsel and assistance, he shrunk for a time from seeking it. He at last made choice of one whose name is still as a household word among the followers of Christ. The Rev. John Newton was at this time pastor of St. Mary Woolnooth, in London. Singularly strong in his perceptions of religious truth, his modes of illustrating it had the quaintness and piquancy that spring from an active fancy, chastened and purified by a life of faith and heavenly love. He was now advanced in life, and knew perhaps better than any man living the trials and dangers of the soul, in its efforts to return to God. To him Wilberforce repaired, opening the way by a few lines.

"December 2, 1785.

"TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON:

"SIR,—There is no need of apology for intruding on you, when the errand is religion

I wish to have some serious conversation with you, and will take the liberty of calling on you in half an hour ; when, if you can not receive me, you will have the goodness to let me have a letter put into my hands at the door, naming a time and place for our meeting—the earlier the more agreeable to me. I have had ten thousand doubts whether I should reveal myself to you, but every argument against doing it has its foundation in pride. I am sure you will hold yourself bound to let no man living know of this application till I release you from the obligation.”

This was written on Friday, and by himself handed to Mr. Newton at church the following Sunday. The next Wednesday was named for an interview. He repaired, at the time appointed, to the house of the pastor. But it is not always an easy matter to open the soul's most sacred and hidden thoughts to the eye of another, and it was with an agitated spirit that he proceeded.

“Once or twice” he made the circuit of the square before, as he says, “I could persuade myself.” The effect of the interview was most happy. “When I came away,” he writes, “I found my mind in a calm, tranquil state, more humbled, and looking up more devoutly to God.”

It is worthy of remark that in this conversation Mr. Newton mentioned the name of John Thornton. He it was who so long before had taught his young kinsman to “remember the poor,” and he had so spoken of him to Mr. Newton as to awaken in the warm heart of the minister of the Gospel a hope that the gifts of Wilberforce might yet be consecrated to the service of Christ. Had not the pious and excellent Thornton even until now remembered before God in prayer the endeared child who at twelve years old had given such promise of piety? Might not these prayers have been as a shield, invisible and yet real, amid subsequent scenes of danger and seduction?

Mr. Wilberforce had now made known his position, and was strengthened by this act. Yet were the early days of his Christian life marked by fluctuation and struggle. It had been a part of Mr. Newton's advice that he should not make sudden changes with regard to society at large, nor "widely separate from former friends." On this he acted, with those limitations which obviously suggested themselves. The club missed a favorite member. The admirer of Mrs. Siddons was seen no more at the play. From the claims of friendship, the demands incident to a public life, he did not withdraw.

We recur to his journal :

"Went as I had promised to Pitt's—sad work. I went there in fear, and for some time kept an awe on my mind. My feelings lessened in the evening, and I could scarce lift up myself in prayer to God at night."

Again, after another visit : "My mind in a sad state this evening—could scarcely pray, but will hope and wait on God."

Even amid these scenes, however, he now begins to look upon things in a more sober light. He says in his journal: "At the levee, and then dined at Pitt's—sort of cabinet dinner. Was often thinking that pompous Thurlow, and elegant Carmarthen, would soon appear in the same row with the poor fellow who waited behind their chairs."

"December 12th. More fervent, I hope, in prayer. Resolved more in God's strength, therefore, I hope, likely to keep my resolutions."

"13th. I hope I feel more need of Divine assistance. May I be enabled to submit to it in distrust of myself. I do not know what to make of myself, but I resolve under God to go on. Much struck with Mr. Newton's narrative, where he says he once persevered for two years and went back again. Oh, may I be preserved from relapse! And yet, if I can not stand it now, what shall I do when the struggle comes on in earnest? I am too intent upon shining in company, and must curb myself here."

Amid the record of struggles and depressions, brighter days are beginning to dawn.

December 20th he writes : " More enlarged and sincere in prayer. Went to hear Romaine. Dined at the Adelphi ; both before and after was much affected by seriousness. Went to hear Forster, who was very good ; enabled to join in the prayers with my whole heart, and never so happy in my life as this whole evening—enlarged in private prayer, and have a good hope toward God. Got up Wednesday morning in the same frame of mind, and filled with peace and hope and humility, yet some doubt if all this is real or will be lasting.—Newton's church—he has my leave to mention my case to my aunt, and Mr. Thornton. I trust God is with me, but he must ever keep beside me ; for I fall the moment I am left to myself. I stayed in town to attend the ordinances, and have been gloriously blest in them."

Soon after he receives an affectionate note from Mr. Thornton. This excellent Christian

friend invites Mr. Wilberforce to his house, for the enjoyment of retired life and Christian sympathy. This latter was just what at this time he most needed, and this under the roof of his friend he found. He now speaks of the promises and grace of Christ, and very soon we find him endeavoring to induce his beloved and only sister to share in his new-found happiness. After a Sabbath spent at Stoke with Mr. Unwin, he writes :

“Can my dear sister wonder that I call on her to participate in the pleasure I am tasting? I know how you sympathize in the happiness of those you love, and I could not therefore forgive myself were I to keep my raptures to myself, and not invite you to partake of my enjoyment. * * * * May every Sabbath be to me, and to those I love, a renewal of these feelings, of which the small tastes we have in this life should make us look forward to that eternal rest which remains for the people of God.”

IV.

Filial and Fraternal Love.

HE who wastes time can not be preparing for eternity. When Mr. Wilberforce looked back on the follies of his earlier years, his throngs of gay friends who had helped him to waste so many precious hours, he was filled with regret. This showed itself, not in idle repinings, but in a systematic endeavor to redeem the time. To accomplish this, he formed a system for the disposition of those hours which were at his command. His biographer thus mentions this period of his life : " Various and accurate were now his studies ; but the book which he most carefully studied, and by which perhaps above all others his mental faculties were perfected, was the holy scripture. This he read and

weighed and pondered over, studying its connection and details, and mastering especially, in their own tongue, the apostolical epistles. This was his chief occupation at Wilford. It was now his daily care to instruct his understanding and discipline his heart."

These plans so diligently and perseveringly pursued were thwarted by one obstacle by which many would have been discouraged. We refer to a constitutional weakness of the eyes, which followed him through life, occasioning great inconvenience, and often compelling him to lay aside both book and pen.

Poorly adapted indeed were the habits of gayety in which up to his twenty-fifth year he had indulged, for increasing the power of thought, or of duly regulating it. Always rapid in his movements, his mind possessed a singular power of turning itself with electric swiftness from one brilliant train of thought to another, and again unexpectedly branching

forth in a flow of new ideas of an entirely opposite character. His faculty of diffusing such a glow of social life over the festive scenes he had so adorned added not a little to his powers of entertainment. But it is easily seen that the excess of this destroyed the power of serious thought. When the love of God and the desire of pleasing and serving him found place in the soul, we find that the Christian mourned in secret that his thoughts were so clothed with wings as to be incapable of fixing themselves even in the most solemn services. The conflicts of this period are revealed in his journals.

July 30, 1786, he says: "At church I wander more than ever, and can scarce keep awake—my thoughts are always straying. Do thou, O God, set my affections on purer pleasures. Every night I have to look back upon a day misemployed, or not improved with fervency and diligence. O God, do thou enable me to live more to thee, to look to Jesus with a single eye, and by

degrees to have the new nature implanted in me, and the heart of stone removed. The sense of God's presence seldom stays on my mind when I am in company, and at times I even have doubts and difficulties about the truth of the great doctrines of Christianity."

The piety to which in later days he attained, the *fixedness* of the soul upon heavenly things, strangely enough contrasts with the struggles that marked the religious life in its beginnings.

Of all the delusions to which a young Christian is subject, perhaps the greatest and the most prevalent in our day is the idea that when the soul has received its first gift of faith and love, and is regarded by others as a partaker of the grace of God, the work is done, the goal is attained, the soul may now sit down at its ease, only interrupted, it may be, by some sudden and short-lived efforts. Had Wilberforce thus paused at the threshold of the Christian life, thus been

content to follow "afar off" the Saviour, asking not how much of union with God it was his privilege to enjoy, but how little of piety would secure an entrance to Heaven, the Church would have lost one of the most valiant soldiers of the Cross, one of the most beautiful exemplifiers of the power of Christianity. Nor this alone. The world would have missed the exercise of that expansive love which toiled so long and so unflinchingly for the outcasts of mankind.

To efforts for the good of others Mr. Wilberforce seems to have been continually led. No sooner was he taught by the Spirit of God to discern the reality and blessedness of the spiritual life than he hastens to communicate his new-born joy. An extract from a letter to his sister closes the last chapter, and furnishes an illustration of this remark. Whatever ascendancy over her mind was his by nature or habit, he used it all to allure her into those pleasant paths upon which he had himself entered. His letters to her

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present the tenderest picture of fraternal love, that will not rest till assured that its object is a partaker of the blessings of the Gospel. Fond and kind as are these epistles, they are yet interspersed with strict and discriminating views of duty and truth faithfully urged.

“What my heart now impels me to say to you,” he writes, “is ‘*Search the Scriptures,*’ and with all that earnestness and constancy which that book claims, in which are the words of eternal life. Never read it without praying to God that he will open your eyes to understand it, for the power of comprehending it comes from him and him only. ‘Seek and ye shall find,’ says our Saviour; ‘Take heed how ye hear;’ which implies that unless we seek, and diligently too, we shall not find, and unless we take heed we shall be deceived in hearing. There is no opinion so fatal as that which is commonly received in *these liberal* days, that a person is in a safe state with regard

to a future world, if he acts tolerably up to his knowledge and convictions, though he may not have taken much pains about acquiring that knowledge, or fixing those convictions."

Again, after urging the performance of a duty, he says: "Let me guard you against thinking that there will be any great singularity in this: it is one of those things wherein the duty is so obvious and binding that in doing it there can be little exertion; in leaving it undone, great blame. * * * May it please God, my dear sister, for Christ's sake to make you abound more and more in every good work. May your heart be comforted, your views cleared, your faith strengthened, your love confirmed. Here indeed I believe (for I have the declaration from the best of men) we must groan, being burdened. Alas! what cause have I for groaning! But let us wait on God with continual prayers for the influence of His blessed Spirit to render us daily fitted

for a better world, where all sin, as well as sorrow, shall cease for ever."

Again he writes encouragingly :

"In receiving the Lord's supper we make a public profession of our being willing to risk our all on Christ, and to appear before our Maker, relying on His merits alone for our favorable acceptance with Him ; we also solemnly devote ourselves to His service, and declare that we will endeavor to live to His glory, as those whom he has purchased, &c. Now in all this you could join from the bottom of your heart, and if fears and hesitation and doubts distract you, remember the poor man in the gospel, 'Lord, I believe ; help Thou my unbelief.'

"O ! my dearest sister, how glorious a change will it be, if ever we all meet beyond the reach of those chances and accidents to which we are exposed in this uncertain state of existence, and with hearts overflowing with gratitude towards that Saviour, who so loved us that He gave Himself for us, to suf-

fer death upon the Cross, to enter into possession of that happiness which knows no limit of degree or duration. May our connections be so formed as to be thus continued beyond the grave, that with those whom we most affectionately regard and value, we may dwell forever, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore !

May God Almighty bless you, my dearest sister, and calm and tranquilize your mind here, and conduct you to happiness hereafter."

This mingled faithfulness and love were well repaid. Miss Wilberforce became a Christian, remarkable through life for humility and self-distrust, and scrupulous regard for the right. For the religious doubts and scruples which at times beclouded her mind, she found in her brother at once an affectionate adviser and a hopeful guide.

The mother of Wilberforce seems by no means to have approved, in its beginning, of

his religious course. Endowed with much that was lovely and valuable in character, she appears to have had a great dread of religious excitement, or a zeal beyond what was common. When a rumor of his inward change reached her, she feared, she hardly knew what, of eccentricity. How will he appear? How make manifest this new enthusiasm? Soon however he visited her. The most obvious change was a more tender and deferential regard to herself. Always amiable and kind, there was now a gentler forbearance, a more thoughtful love, a stronger control over a temper naturally impulsive. Her son was not lost—no; he was restored, clothed with new excellences.

Far short too as the influences of his education fell of the standard which he had adopted, he renders grateful acknowledgment not only for the affection that blest his early years, but for the religious instruction also. This was by no means a spirit of timidity, or undue conciliation. When occasion called,

he could express forcibly his differing views. On a point of conscience, on the subject of theatrical amusements, he says: "I must speak out. When I reflect that I shall have to account for my answer at the bar of the great Judge of quick and dead, I cannot, I dare not withhold or smooth over my opinion." He adds: "I trust my dear mother will do justice to the motives which have compelled me thus to express myself."

This justice was eventually rendered by this parent, herself possessed of many shining excellences of character. Her prejudices were overcome, her religious views deepened, the soul's refuge sought. "Remember me in your prayers," was her fervent request in after years, of the son whose piety she had so distrusted.

This affectionate plainness on subjects which he regarded of the highest moment appears often in letters of friendship. An extract follows from a letter to one of the

most amiable and beloved of his early correspondents, Lord Muncaster. This is written in 1786, and affords an illustration of the nature of this influence in the first year of his public religious life.

“O my dear Muncaster, how can we go on as if present things were to last for ever, when so often reminded ‘that the fashion of this world passeth away.’ Every day I live, I see greater reason in considering this life but as a passage to another. And when summoned to the tribunal of God, to give an account of all things we have done in the body, how shall we be confounded by the recollection of those many instances in which we have relinquished a certain eternal for an uncertain transitory good ! You are not insensible to these things, but you think of them rather as a follower of Socrates than as a disciple of Jesus. You see how frankly I deal with you ; in truth I can no otherwise so well show the interest I take in your happiness. These thoughts are uppermost in my

heart, and they will come forth when I do not repress my natural emotions. Oh that they had a more prevailing influence over my disposition and conduct ; then might I hope to afford men occasion ‘to glorify our Father which is in Heaven ;’ and I should manifest the superiority of the principle that actuated me, by the more than ordinary spirit and activity by which my parliamentary, my domestic, and all my other duties were marked and characterized.

V.

Suppression of Immorality.

THE next year (1787) Mr. Wilberforce was early in London. A constant attendant in the House of Commons, awake always to the interests of his constituents, he was yet intent upon a work for the good of the country at large. This was the obtaining of a Royal Proclamation for the suppression of immorality.

That at this time there prevailed great laxity of morals, there is abundant reason to believe. The mass of men, gay and busy, seemed to have forgotten the future life. Those who were looked upon as Christians, too often prized the outward form rather than the inward power. Even among the ministers of religion, indifference prevailed to

a great extent. So plain was it that the state of public morals was ruinously low, that men of different views, who loved their country's good, hailed with joy the King's Proclamation. This was to be followed by an associated effort to carry out in practice its spirit and letter.

Nearly a century before this time, a "Society for the Reformation of Manners" had existed, and its history, written by Dr. Woodward, had been to Mr. Wilberforce a prompter to a similar effort. The object of the earlier society had been two-fold; the religious growth of its members being the first, the suppression of immorality the second. "I am convinced," wrote Mr. Wilberforce to his friend Mr. Hey, "that ours is an infinitely inferior aim; yet surely it is of the utmost consequence, and worthy of the labors of a whole life."

Warmly enlisted in this object, he endeavored to arouse among his numerous friends a spirit of resistance to the vices of the times;

the gayety and dissipation, which, pervading the higher ranks of life, were imitated by every other. Looking upon society as it existed around him, knowing well from what he had been rescued, his heart burned to save others also. A member of the National Church, his first attempt was to interest the bishops in the object, and induce them to become members and patrons of the association. He determined for this end, at the close of the parliamentary session, to travel about the country and call on these prelates at their several residences. In this he spent considerable time, and obtained the countenance of many of the clergy, inducing them to become the active promoters of the plan. He also called on several others. In these self-denying labors he was no stranger to rebuffs and discouragements.

“So you wish, young man,” said one, “to be a reformer of men’s morals.”

Before them hung a painting. It was the scene of the Crucifixion.

“See what is the end of reformers.”

If by this it was intended to discourage the young pleader for righteousness, the pictured presence of his Lord had perhaps a contrary effect.

These labors seem to have been attended with a good degree of success. The society was soon in active and useful operation, and did much in its day to check the outrages upon decency and morality which were prevalent.

Being well established, Mr. Wilberforce left its interests in charge of others, and absenting himself from London, after a tour into Devonshire, fixed himself for a season at Bath.

Here he had leisure for meditation. “By God’s help,” he writes in his journal, “I will set vigorously about reform. I believe one cause of my having fallen so short is because I have aimed no higher. Lord Bacon says, great changes are easier than small ones. Remember thy situation, abounding with

comforts, requires thee to be peculiarly on thy guard, lest when thou hast eaten and art full thou forget God."

Not far from this time an excellent work was issued from the London press. It was entitled, "Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society." This book was attributed to the pen of Mr. Wilberforce. In its pages the king's mandate was mentioned with evident pleasure; and while minute familiarity with the forms of polite life was betrayed, certain prevalent customs were examined and compared with the New Testament. It was a good book, but Mr. Wilberforce was not its author. It spoke so well his views of religious and moral obligation, that we may suppose he could hardly have been displeased at the mistake. The real author was Miss Hannah More, who, having lived much in the great world, and gained great celebrity in the literary circles of London, had but lately retired to a home of her own in the country,

where she devoted her time to the writing of such works as were calculated to promote religion. With this lady Wilberforce became acquainted. "I find here," she wrote from Bath in 1787, "a great many friends, but those with whom I have chiefly passed my time are Mr. Wilberforce's family. That young gentleman's character is the most extraordinary I ever knew, for talents, virtue, and piety. It is difficult not to grow wiser and better every time one converses with him."

His views of life and duty may be gathered from a letter written a little before this to his mother.

"It is evident that we are to consider our peculiar situations, and in these to do all the good we can. Some men are thrown into public, some have their lot in private life. These different states have their corresponding duties; and he whose destination is of the former sort will do as ill to immure

himself in solitude as he who is only a village Hampden would were he to head an army or to address a senate.

“What I have said will, I hope, be sufficient to remove any apprehensions that I mean to shut myself up either in my closet in town, or in my hermitage in the country. No, my dear mother, in my circumstances this would merit no better name than desertion ; and if I were thus to fly from the post where Providence has placed me, I know not how I could look for the blessing of God upon my retirement ; and without this heavenly assistance, either in the world or in solitude, our own endeavors will be equally ineffectual.

“I feel that I am serving God best when most actively engaged in the business of life. What humbles me, is the sense that I forego so many opportunities of doing good ; and it is my constant prayer that God will enable me to serve him more steadily, and my fellow-creatures more assiduously.”

VI.

The Slave-Trade.

A NEW era had already commenced in the parliamentary career of Wilberforce.

The attention of many humane persons in England had been turned to the subject of the African slave-trade. This traffic, toward the close of the last century, still existed, unchecked either by legal statute or public opinion. On the bosom of the Thames the slave-ship floated securely, and without restraint was accustomed to go and return. In the open light of day were these vessels fitted up with every facility for packing human beings who were forcibly removed from their native land and sold in foreign climes. Checked for a season by the war of the

American Revolution, the trade had recently been greatly revived.

The labors of the early opponents of slavery, commenced some years before this time, had not however been without efficiency. The perseverance of Granville Sharpe had caused to be promulgated among the people the great principle of the British constitution, that "Every man in England is free to sue for and defend his rights, and that force can not be used without legal process." By a strength of moral courage that would not be damped by any opposition, he had won from the judges of the law the decision that "As soon as any slave sets his foot upon English territory he becomes free." Cowper, in the immortal lines beginning, "Slaves can not breathe in England," had embalmed in the public heart the action of the law. The untiring investigations of Clarkson into the minute details of the trade had been pursued for some time, and several excellent publications issued, at

the head of which may be placed the prize essay which bore his name. This seemed to be as far as the friends of freedom had been able to proceed. There was among them no one of sufficient political influence to move the arm of government to put an end to this outrage.

Many religious persons felt deeply on the sin of wresting from the African his rights, and dooming him to a life of bondage. "If persevered in after the period of investigation," wrote John Newton, than whom no one had greater means of knowing its nature and effects, "it will constitute a national sin, and that of a very deep dye."

Among the early advocates for the slave was the Rev. James Ramsay. A clergyman of the national church, he had resided many years in one of the West India islands. He had thus become familiar with slavery in its haunts, and on his return to England wrote and conversed on this subject in such a manner as awoke against him much opposition.

Those with whom he had been on terms of friendship when abroad, bitterly complained of the indelicacy that lifted the veil from their domestic institutions.

Mr. Ramsay, at the time of which we speak, was on a footing of intimacy with the family of Sir Charles Middleton. His statements afforded themes for frequent conversation, and the heart of Lady Middleton became so deeply moved that she would not suffer the matter to rest. What was wanting was evidently some one to espouse the cause, and give a voice and expression to the feelings afloat in the community.

Lady Middleton entreated of her husband, who was himself a member of Parliament, to bring it forward and demand an investigation.

"It would be in bad hands," replied Sir Charles, "if committed to me, who have never made a speech in the House in my life."

Who then *is* the fit person ?

Mr. Wilberforce was mentioned—his talents, his surpassing eloquence, his devotion to truth and virtue, his friendship with the prime-minister.

Sir Charles was prevailed on by Lady Middleton, whose zeal would admit of no delay, to write immediately to him.

Of this application Wilberforce has said : “It was just one of the many impulses which were all giving my mind one direction.”

Others beside the breakfast-party at Lady Middleton’s had fixed upon the same individual as the only one who could effectually become the champion of this cause. To introduce it into Parliament, and to uphold it when introduced, required a leader of peculiar powers. Edmund Burke, the great advocate for East India reform, had, in 1780, attempted this also, but had been obliged to abandon it. The evil, so plain to his far-seeing vision, was hidden from the eyes of the British merchants, who had chosen him to represent their interests. It could not be

done by a political partisan; it must be done by one of independent position, and above all by one who could "combine and so render irresistible the scattered sympathies of the religious classes."

But these expressed opinions were by no means the moving power that induced in Mr. Wilberforce that devotion to the cause which marked his life. Some years before, he had written to a friend going to the West Indies, commissioning him to collect facts on this subject, and he had even then expressed the hope, almost a prophetic one, that some time or other he should "redress the wrongs of these wretched and degraded beings."

In boyhood even he had written an article for a public journal on the "odious traffic in human flesh." We may add that the native characteristics of his heart, his kindness, sensitiveness, strong sense of justice, and uprightness, were all adapted to enlist him in this subject. His native powers, without the influence of religion, might very probably

have led him to adopt this course. But they would scarcely have held him to the work. Alluding to the beginning of his parliamentary life, he says, "personal distinction was then my darling object." How soon would this and every secondary motive have failed in the trying contest, let those who have embarked in it attest. No arm, save that Almighty strength, on which he had now learned to lean, could have held a mind like his, so perseveringly, through long years of watching and waiting, of peril and opposition. In enlisting in this peculiar service of humanity, the very greatness of the evil so appals the heart, the apathy of others appears so revolting, that the power of looking steadily at the object seems too often to be taken away. All honor then be given to those who, in the dawning of its first day, upheld with steady hand and Christian heart this great cause—but no; we pause. Let us rather render praise to that Almighty goodness, which was pleased in those early periods to set in motion

moral causes, which have not yet ceased to operate, but which reach even to our own times, and shall never cease to work, till the last shackle shall have been broken, and the last victim of slavery redeemed.

For the basis of the arguments to be brought forward, a body of distinct facts was necessary. In order to this, Mr. Pitt issued a summons to the Privy Council to examine, as a board of trade, the commercial intercourse with Africa. Certain witnesses were deputed by the African merchants to appear before the council. These undertook to establish, not only the policy but the absolute humanity of the trade ! We smile at these as barbarians ; yet is it not well, when self-interest comes in competition with the justice due to every human being, to consider in what light any proceeding may be viewed, when it shall have become a fact on the page of history ?

Before this, however, the friends of abolition had united, and formed themselves into

a committee for the purpose of raising funds and collecting information. Their first meeting consisted of twelve, most of whom were London merchants, and the greater part Quakers. Of this body Granville Sharpe was elected chairman. Though small at first, it rapidly increased. The labors of Clarkson were unremitting. The voluminous results of his labors astonished Mr. Pitt, who, on one occasion, expressed some doubt as to the truth of certain statements. Upon further acquaintance their accuracy and minuteness overwhelmed him with conviction. This committee, at the suggestion of Mr. Wilberforce, prepared evidence and witnesses, which they opposed to the assertions of the friends of the African merchants.

These movements could not be in progress without greatly arousing the public mind. Here is a little glimpse of the manner in which many felt and talked in that day. Hannah More thus writes to her friend, Mrs. Carter :

“This most important cause, the project to abolish the slave-trade in Africa, has very much occupied my thoughts this summer. The young gentleman, Mr. Wilberforce, who has embarked in it with the zeal of an apostle, has been much with me, and engaged all my little interest and all my affections in it. My dear friend, be sure to canvass every body who has a heart. It is a subject too ample for a letter, and I shall have a great deal to say to you when we meet. To my feelings it is the most interesting subject which was ever discussed in the annals of humanity.”

Again, she writes: “I am busily engaged on a poem to be called ‘Slavery.’ I grieve I did not set about it sooner, as it must now be done in such a hurry as no poem should ever be written in, to be properly correct. But bad or good, if it does not come out at the particular moment when the discussion comes on in Parliament, it will not be worth a *straw*.”

Just at this time the chosen leader of this

great and humane enterprise was laid aside by dangerous illness. It seemed but too probable that death was about to remove him from the post assigned to him, and to which he alone seemed fitted. This was to his fellow-laborers a most unexpected blow. A consultation of physicians ended in the declaration that "he had not stamina to last a fortnight." He was removed from London to Bath, little expecting to return. He himself, however, seems not to have given up entirely the hope of recovery. From Bath he writes: "Behold me a banished man from London, and from business. It is no more than I expect, if my constituents vote my seat abdicated, and proceed to elect another representative. However, I hope I shall yet be enabled to do them and the public some service."

Before leaving London, however, he had secured an interview with Mr. Pitt. To him, in case of his own death, he committed the African cause. The prime-minister of Eng-

land bent in tenderness over the couch of his apparently dying friend, and assured him that even were the leader removed, the cause should not die. With much feeling Wilberforce wrote of this interview: "He has promised me, if I desire it, to do *all* for me that, if I were an efficient man, it would be proper for me to do myself. This is all I can now say; I might add more were we side by side on my sofa."

The session of Parliament was advancing. The inquiry was afloat, "Can nothing be done?" The London committee, aware of the loss incurred, and unwilling to make any change, insisted that if at last Mr. Wilberforce could do nothing, "they should leave to him the selection of his substitute." But he was now so reduced as to be unable to read their letters. At this emergency the prime-minister informed the chairman of the committee of the pledge he had given. This he was now ready to redeem. Accordingly on the 5th of May, 1788, Mr. Pitt brought

forward a motion that would secure the introduction of the subject early the next session. Notwithstanding his wish to prevent premature debate, a warm discussion followed the motion. Mr. Fox declared himself, almost without reserve, in favor of abolition. Mr. Burke, now in the decline of life, appeared its decided friend. Much sympathy was expressed for Mr. Wilberforce, and desires for his restoration. "It is better," said Mr. Fox, "that the cause should be in his hands than in mine; from him I honestly believe that it will come with more weight, more authority, more probability of success." The general question was postponed. Curiosity had, however, been awakened, and a number of the members visited a slave-ship then fitting out in the river Thames. Pity and indignation took possession of them. Sir W. Dolben brought forward a bill for the immediate check of these cruelties. The slave merchants were loud in their complaints. Notwithstanding

this, the bill, after some discussion and an assurance to the friends of abolition that it was but a temporary relief, and not a remedy, passed both Houses, and became a law.

Mr. Wilberforce from his retirement was now able to watch the proceedings. Contrary to the opinions of the physicians, he was evidently gaining strength. The following summer found him with his mother and sister at his Westmoreland home. His health was as yet but partially restored. Such was the interest awakened in his behalf that during the summer he was overwhelmed with visitors. This was unfavorable to recovery, and he writes in his journal to this effect: "The life I am now leading is unfavorable in all respects both to mind and body; as little suitable to me, considered as an invalid, under all the circumstances of my situation, as it is unbecoming my character and profession as a Christian."

"This place," he wrote to Mr. Newton,

just before he quitted Westmoreland, "wherein I looked this summer for much solitude and quiet, has proved very different from retirement. The tour to the lakes has become so fashionable that the banks of the Thames are scarcely more public than are those of Windermere. You little knew what you were doing when you wished yourself with me in Westmoreland. My experience will not, I trust, be wasted upon me, and I shall lay my plans in future with more judgment and circumspection. At this moment my cottage overflows with guests."

This was his last summer at this rural home. When his lease had expired, he thought it on the whole best to give up the house.

The following winter was spent in London. Again he yearns for more solitude and better opportunity for religious meditation. "This perpetual hurry of business ruins me in soul and body. I must make a thorough reform." Again he says: "Blessed be God who hath

appointed the Sabbath, and interposes these seasons of serious recollection. May they be effectual to their purpose ; may my errors be corrected, my desires sanctified, and my whole soul quickened and animated in the Christian course. Write, I beseech thee, thy law in my heart, that I may not sin against thee. I often waste my precious hours for not having a settled plan beforehand to what studies to betake myself, what books to read. Let me attend to this for the time to come, and may my slave business and my society business be duly attended to."

In the spring, as the meeting of Parliament approached, though still in delicate health, he found himself in readiness for the next campaign.

On the twelfth of May the great question came before the House. Mr. Wilberforce opened the debate in a speech of three hours and a half. In this eloquent appeal he gave utterance to the feelings that had long dwelt in his heart. Examining the conflicting

details of testimony, he made visible to the understanding of all, the effect of the trade upon Africa—upon the colonies—upon the nation itself. The appeal was overwhelming. The sufferings of the middle-passage, “where the aggregate must be multiplied by every individual tale of woe,” were asserted. The alleged comforts of the miserable victims were disproved. As a last infallible witness, Death itself, by its fearful ravages in the slave-ship, was summoned by the eloquent pleader for justice, to give testimony to their unutterable wrongs.

This was an eventful day. The character of this address is best known by its effect upon the “audience of orators” who listened to it. Mr. Wilberforce was supported in the noblest manner by Pitt and Fox and Burke. Said the last of these: “The House, the nation and Europe are under great and serious obligations to the honorable gentleman for having brought forward the subject in a manner the most masterly, impressive and

eloquent. The principles," he said, "were so well laid down, and supported with so much force and order, that it equaled any thing he had heard in modern times, and was not perhaps to be surpassed in the remains of Grecian eloquence."

Equally strong were the words of Bishop Porteus. He speaks of this as "one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches ever heard in that or any other place. It was," said he, "a glorious night for this country. I was in the House from five to eleven."

The opponents of abolition were now on the alert to throw every obstacle in the way. But such an introduction of the subject to the House of Commons was deemed by its friends of itself a triumph, and a precursor to still greater good.

VII.

Visit to Hannah More.

THERE is sometimes a strange interest in a distant charity, merely because, being afar off, it is dimly discerned, and surrounded, it may be, by circumstances that give it an aspect of romance. To convert the heathen on the other side of the world, to ransom captives one has never seen, may possess for some minds a charm that can even cause forgetfulness of more immediate duties. To infer, however, because one does engage in enterprises of charity and justice, embracing distant objects, that therefore they neglect more obvious and familiar duties, is most unjust. Because a person accomplishes one good, we must not infer either that he cannot or does not perform another, even though that other

may appear to involve a distinct set of powers, a changed course of action. Because the pleader for the victim of the slave-ship, by his eloquent and energetic addresses, moved and swayed the hearts of his compeers, and even of his opponents, we must not suppose that he forgot the lowlier duties that are binding upon all.

The acquaintance of Wilberforce with Hannah More has been already mentioned. Those who feared God were now his chosen friends. Of this distinguished lady we may remark, that by the few who knew her best, she was far more valued for the fervor of her piety than for the brilliancy of her genius. This last was but the goodly frame of the picture—the costly setting of the diamond. In August of this year she received at her own home at Cowslip Green, as welcome guests, Mr. Wilberforce and his sister. The Misses More spared no effort to entertain their visitors, and the sequestered surroundings of their cottage-home were industriously

explored. No one could ramble with Wilberforce among rural scenes without being aware of his genuine love for the beauties of natural scenery.

Not more than ten miles from the home of Miss More rose the cliffs of Cheddar, not unrenowned for their abrupt and wild and rugged scenery, nor unvisited by curious travelers. The guest of Cowslip Green must by no means leave the neighborhood till he too had visited this romantic spot. He fancied time would hardly permit, but at last suffered himself to be persuaded. On his return some disappointment was felt, that he, so great a lover of the picturesque, had expressed so little of enthusiasm.

“How do you like the cliffs?” asked Miss Patty, who had urged the expedition.

Mr. Wilberforce acknowledged they were “very fine,” but added, “the poverty and distress of the people are dreadful.” There was no further conversation. He retired to the solitude of his own room.

Miss Patty observed that the cold chicken placed in the carriage for his dinner returned untouched, and remarked to Hannah and Miss Wilberforce that she feared he was ill.

At supper he again appeared. Seated at table he requested that the servants might be dismissed. Then addressing his hostess, he began : "Miss Hannah More, something must be done for Cheddar." He then unfolded the observations of the day. There could be found at Cheddar no resident minister, no schools, little means of subsistence even ; wretched and squalid poverty and ignorance seemed the leading characteristics of the people.

The cause of his abstraction was now explained, and the ladies entered warmly into his views. It furnished an evening's conversation, and the question, "What shall be done?" was finally answered by Wilberforce, who exclaimed, addressing his hostess : "*If you will be at the trouble, I will be at the expense.*"

This was near the close of August, and on the first of October Miss More opened her first school in Cheddar. This was a Sabbath-School, for the ignorant, the wretched people of that secluded district.

“It was,” she wrote, “an affecting sight. Several of the grown-up youth had been tried at the late assizes—three were the children of a person lately condemned to be hanged ; many were thieves, all ignorant, profane and vicious beyond belief. I can do them little good I fear, but the grace of God can.”

To the Sunday-School was soon added a week-day school, at which the girls were taught sewing, knitting, spinning. Other destitute neighborhoods were visited, and before the year closed, the number of Sabbath pupils increased to five hundred.

Mr. Wilberforce was by no means unmindful of the part which he had engaged to fill. To Miss More he wrote :

“The best proof you can give me that you believe me hearty in the cause, or sincere in

the wishes I have expressed, is to call on me for money without reserve. Every one should contribute out of his own proper fund. I have more money than time, and if you or your sister, (on whom I foresee must be devolved the superintendence of our infant establishment,) will condescend to be my almoner, you will enable me to dispose of some of the superfluity it has pleased God to give me, to good purpose. Sure I am, that they who subscribe attention, industry, &c., furnish articles of more sterling and intrinsic value. Besides, I have a rich banker in London, Mr. H. Thornton, whom I cannot oblige so much, as by drawing on him for purposes like these. I shall take the liberty of inclosing a draft for forty pounds ; but this is only meant for beginning."

Repeatedly do we find him using similar words and thus fulfilling his contract. Christian love, a pure expansive principle, will not fix itself upon a single class of objects. Where it burns in the heart, it will encircle

with its own warmth and brightness whatever it approaches. It is only when be-dimmed by human infirmity, that it cleaves exclusively to one class of subjects, or one mode of action.

Returning to London Mr. Wilberforce was again deeply absorbed in the slave business. Facts and details were made familiar to him, and views interchanged, as once every week the slave committee dined with him. At the breakfast-table he usually received those who came to him on business, or with whose plans of benevolence he wished to become familiar. To a society which appears to have had for its object the education of young men for purposes of religious usefulness, he is stated to have subscribed in one year one hundred pounds under four anonymous entries, to avoid notice. Upon the objects of this charity he conferred the still more valuable favor of inviting them to his house and cultivating their acquaintance ; often by his in-

fluence giving a direction to the course of their future labors. His station in life, his intercourse with the great, had not had its effect to dim his perception of true merit, even under rough disguises. A keen and humorous perception of character marked his intercourse with the various classes of men by whom he was surrounded. "We have different forms," he remarked, "assigned to us in the school of life—different gifts imparted. All is not attractive that is good. Iron is useful, though it does not sparkle like the diamond. Gold has not the fragrance of a flower. So different persons have different modes of excellence, and we must have an eye to them all."

In June of this year (1790) he records in his journal a narrow escape from a serious accident. "How little," he remarks, "have I thought of my deliverance the other day, when the carriage was dashed to pieces! How many have been killed by such acci-

dents, and I unhurt ! O let me endeavor to turn to God." He adds, a few days later : "I have been thinking of one particular failing—that of self-indulgence—while I have aimed too little at general reformation. It is when we desire to love God with all our hearts, and in all things to devote ourselves to his service, that we find our continual need of his help, and such incessant proofs of our own weakness, that we are kept watchful and sober, and may hope by degrees to be renewed in the spirit of our minds. O may I be thus changed from darkness into light. Whatever reason there may be for my keeping open house in Palace Yard, certain it is that quiet and solitude are favorable to reflection and sober-mindedness ; let me therefore endeavor to secure to myself frequent seasons of uninterrupted communion with God."

That same year he spent some time at Yoxall Lodge, the seat of Rev. T. Gisborne. With this gentleman a college acquaintance

had been renewed by sympathy in the abolition question. Here he became acquainted with one whom he afterward numbered among his most valuable friends—Thomas Babington. With these friends it became his custom to spend a portion of each summer. Here he could enjoy, when he desired it, uninterrupted privacy. Here he put in practice resolutions which the constant influx of visitors at his own residence in Westmoreland had rendered impossible, devoting ten or twelve hours every day to study. “I could bear testimony,” writes Mr. Gisborne, “were such attestation needful, to his laborious, unabated diligence, day after day, in pursuing his investigations on the slave business, and in composing his invaluable work on Practical Christianity. He sallied forth always for a walk a short time before dinner, among the holly groves of the then uninclosed Needwood forest. Here

“his grateful voice
Sang its own joy, and made the woods rejoice.”

“Often,” said his host, “have I heard its melodious tones among the trees, at such times, from the distance of full half a mile.”

“Never,” says Wilberforce himself of these days, “was I in better spirits than when I thus passed my time in quiet study.”

Another friend writes from the same place : “Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Babington have never appeared down stairs since we came, except to take a hasty dinner, and for half an hour after we have supped ; the slave-trade now occupies them nine hours daily. Mr. Babington told me last night that he had fourteen hundred folio pages to read, to detect the contradictions, and to collect the answers which corroborated the assertions made by Mr. Wilberforce in his speeches. These, with more than two thousand papers to be abridged, must all be done within a fortnight. They talk of sitting up one night in each week to accomplish it. The two friends are beginning to look very ill, but they are in excellent spirits, and at this

moment I hear them laughing at some absurd questions in the examination. You would think Mr. Wilberforce much changed since we were at Rayrigg. He talks a great deal more on serious subjects than he used to do."

Far enough was his from being "the easy service of popular declamation on premises supplied by others." They who saw only the results of his labors spread before them, adorned with the graces of eloquence, little dreamed of the days and nights of toil that had preceded.

The work on Practical Christianity has been alluded to above. Among the other employments of his retired hours, he had formed a plan of writing a religious work. It was often laid aside for other duties, and as often resumed.

To a friend he writes from Yoxall Lodge :
"I have not advanced a single step since we parted at Buxton, in composing the

little tract of which I then spoke to you. This is not, however, owing to indolence, procrastination, or any alteration in my opinion of the utility of the work ; but after mature consideration I thought it right to make the slave business my first object. Ever since I have been at all stationary, I have been laboring at it with great assiduity."

In November he returned to London. On the ninth of that month he records in his journal the death of his early and excellent friend, John Thornton. "He was allied to me," he adds, "by relationship and family connection. It was by living with great simplicity of intention and conduct in the Christian life, more than by any superiority of understanding or of knowledge, that he rendered his name illustrious. He devoted large sums annually to charitable purposes, especially to the promotion of religion in his own and other countries. He assisted many

clergymen, enabling them to live in comfort and to practice a useful hospitality. He died without a groan or a struggle, in full view of eternity. O may my last end be like his !”

VIII.

Gloomy Prospects of the Abolition Bill.

THE day was approaching when the claims of the African were to be again presented to the Parliament. Notwithstanding the unremitting labors which we have recorded, the prospect was by no means bright. When Wilberforce first appeared as the advocate for the slave, many of the friends who sympathized with him supposed that the work would be speedily accomplished. He himself may very possibly have indulged at the outset the thought that the nation needed only to be informed of the enormities of the slave-trade in order to hasten it to an inevitable issue. Soon, however, it became evident to the observing eyes of the prime movers in this matter that it was beset with difficulties.

The first generous outbreak of indignation had died away, and those who felt that "by this craft we have our wealth" had rallied their strength. The Guinea traders and West India planters rose up to defend the institution that filled their coffers with gain. Commercial men, to an extent altogether undreamed of, allied themselves with these, and presented a formidable array of opposition to the advocatess of the oppressed. Many, too, of the early friends of the cause had lost the ardor of their first love, while the opponents were wakeful as self-interest could make them.

"The affair goes on but slowly in parliament," writes one, "and with a more pertinacious and assiduous attendance of our adversaries than of our friends, except indeed Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. William Smith, Sir. W. Dolben, and a few others, so that we can not yet guess the result."

Moreover, the documentary evidences were ponderous and tedious. Necessary as were

these protracted sittings to final success, they gave time to the defenders of the trade to multiply and to encourage one another. Yet was Mr. Wilberforce not without assurances of sympathy. John Wesley, now upon his death-bed, ready to depart and be with his Lord, with trembling hand penned a few lines to the advocate of abolition.

“February 24th, 1791.

“MY DEAR SIR :

“Unless the Divine power has raised you up to be as Athanasius, *contra mundum*, I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very purpose, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils ; but if God be for you, who can be against you. Are all of them together stronger than God ? O be not weary in well-doing ! Go on in the name of God, till even

American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it. That He who has guided you from your youth up, may continue to strengthen you in this and all things, is the prayer of, dear sir,

“Your affectionate servant,

“JOHN WESLEY.”

This was as a voice from the confines of the heavenly glory, and well calculated to cheer and strengthen the heart of the laborer at the dark period in which it was written. Yet had he still a higher refuge, a richer resource. He approached the conflict in a strength not his own. “May God,” he writes in his journal, a few days before the opening of the contest, “enable me to live more to his glory, and bless me in this great work I have now in hand. May I look to him for wisdom and strength and the power of persuasion, and may I surrender myself to him, as to the event, with perfect submission, and ascribe to him all the praise if I

succeed, and if I fail say from the heart Thy will be done."

In April the debate came on. Both Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt gave their support to the abolition bill. The latter in an eloquent speech was said to have equalled the most brilliant of his own great efforts. The debate was called "the war of the pigmies against the giants of the House." The opposition however gained ground, and "the character, talents, and humanity of the House were left in a minority of eighty-eight to one hundred and sixty-three."

One effort of the friends of Africa, at this time, met with better success. The Sierre Leone Company received the sanction of the legislature. Its object was the formation of a colony on the coast of Africa. Such persons as might settle there, were to have no connection with the slave-trade, except by every possible means to oppose themselves to it. The first colonists were principally free

colored persons who emigrated from Nova Scotia, to the number of eleven hundred. They had been allowed, in that province, bounties of land for services rendered to the British arms in the war of the Revolution. This fleet, consisting of fifteen vessels, was commanded by a brother of the celebrated Clarkson, whose health shortly after this became seriously undermined by reason of his unremitting labors in the cause of freedom. Lieutenant Clarkson was the first governor of the colony, and afterwards Mr. Macauley.

After this we find Wilberforce at a country residence near Bath. He writes: "To have grass grow up to my door after so long a parching of my heels on the pavement of London, is not a luxury, but necessary for me." During the autumn he pursued a diligent course of study, making it a point of conscience to allow no time to run to waste. Next to his duties to God, to humanity, to the business arising out of his public office, he regarded the cultivation of every talent

bestowed upon him as a binding duty. His inner life of progress and improvement included not alone the religious affections ; the intellect was also to be dedicated to God, and to be kept brightened and ready for the Master's use. Here we have a specimen of the manner in which seasons of relaxation were spent. "Busy in reading English History with Babington." In their daily walks the two friends continued their study, one of them reading aloud while his steps were guided by the other. "Delightful weather," he says at this time—"reading Rapin out of doors." His occupations may be gathered from his list of subjects. "Bible, English History, Fenelon's Characters, Horace, by heart, Cicero de Oratore, Addison's Cato, Hume, Hudibras, Pilgrim's Progress, Doddridge's Sermons, Jonathan Edwards, Owen, *Letters*." Of the extent of his correspondence he complains as consuming much time, yet he felt it to be an important means of usefulness.

The next year (1792) the slave subject was again renewed in Parliament. Wilberforce wrote thus to his friend Mr. Hey :

“I know how much you are interested in what regards our poor African fellow-creatures, and therefore I take up my pen for a single moment to inform you that after a long debate (we did not separate till near seven this morning) my motion for immediate abolition was put by, though supported strenuously by Mr. Fox, and by Mr. Pitt, with more energy and ability than were almost ever exerted in the House of Commons. Windham, who has no love for Pitt, tells me that Fox and Grey, with whom he walked home after the debate, agreed with him in thinking Pitt’s speech one of the most extraordinary displays of eloquence they had ever heard. For the last twenty minutes he really seemed to be inspired. He was dilating on the future prospects of civilizing Africa, a topic which I had suggested to him in the morning. We carried a motion, however,

afterward, for gradual abolition, against the united forces of Africans and West Indians, by a majority of two hundred and thirty-eight to eighty-five. I am congratulated on all hands, yet I can not but feel hurt and humiliated. We must endeavor to force the gradual abolitionists in *their* bill (for I will never myself bring forward a parliamentary license to rob and murder) to allow as short a term as possible, and under as many limitations."

Even this motion for gradual abolition proved in the end unsuccessful. Altered and amended and discussed, it was finally postponed till the next session. Heart-wearying indeed to the real friends of the cause were the efforts for the gradual abolition of the trade. Watchful of the various shades of feeling, they could not be slow to perceive when a *time* was named for the gradual abolition to take effect, that there were not a few who were desirous of prolonging the days

of the expiring monster. Darkness seemed to be settling down upon the hopes of humanity.

So obnoxious had the leaders of this cause become that their correspondence with one another could not be trusted openly to the post-offices. To exchange letters with Mr. Wilberforce led to much inconvenience. "The box in which our petition is inclosed," says a Glasgow correspondent, "has been directed to another, that its contents may be unsuspected." "If you write," asked the late Dr. Currie of Liverpool, "please to direct without franking it." From that city, the chief seat of the African trade, others made the same request. "Correspondence was conducted by unsigned letters, sent in the covers of unsuspected persons."

But these were among the lesser evils. To such a pitch had opposition arisen at one time that fears were entertained that Mr. Wilberforce would fall a victim to the violence of his enemies. Among other move-

ments of this nature we find mention of one Kimber, a West Indian captain. He is described by Sir James Stonehouse as “a bad man, a great spendthrift, one who would swear to any falsehood, and who is linked with a set of rascals like himself.” This man had been charged by Mr. Wilberforce in the debate of 1792 with great cruelty in the management of the trade. He had been publicly indicted for the murder of a negro girl, and only escaped from the law through the connivance of a person in power. By this desperate man Mr. Wilberforce was followed by threatened violence for two years. To his friend Lord Muncaster he wrote :

“I know how little the proverb ‘out of sight out of mind’ holds good in the case of any of your friendships, and therefore I was not surprised at the warmth with which you expressed yourself on the subject of Kimber. Who told you any thing of the matter? Was it from me? I am sure I intended not to mention it, lest I should awaken your kind

solicitude, which, at the distance of three hundred miles from its object, is not the most comfortable companion. Perhaps in some unguarded moment the matter slipped from my pen. I do n't know yet whether he has any further measures in store ; mean time be assured I will do all for my own security which you would think proper were you my adviser. I can't say I apprehend much ; and I really believe that if he were to commit any act of violence it would be beneficial rather than injurious to *the cause*."

This annoyance was terminated at last by the interference of Lord Sheffield, an honorable opponent.

Notwithstanding all the labors of Wilberforce, and the repeated proofs which he had given of his devotion to the cause of African freedom, there were not wanting those who represented him as weary of the work. In these dark days of the warfare of justice with cruelty, of high-toned principle with avarice and selfishness, it was indeed a favorite resort

with some to take advantage of inevitable delays and discomfitures to blame the want of zeal on the part of the leader. He was said, in reference to the very cause which dwelt in his heart's deepest infoldings, the love of which had grown with his growth as a public man, and increased with the strength of years, to have given up! His indignant surprise at this accusation can not be suppressed. In a letter to Dr. Currie, after clearing himself from the imputation, he adds: "In truth, the principles on which I act in this business, being those of religion, not of sensibility or personal feeling, can know no remission, and yield to no delay."

In these words we have the key to that "persistency mingled with gentleness" which have made him a model for reformers.

One who wrought from such motives must necessarily be hopeful, and he adds: "I am confident of success, though I dare not say any thing positive as to the period of it."

Again he says of the accusation: "It is

one of those calumnies to which every public man is exposed, and of which, though I have had a tolerable proportion, I can not complain of having had more than my share. In every case of political expediency, there appears to me room for the consideration of times and seasons. At one time it may be proper to push, at another, in other circumstances, to withhold our efforts ; but in the present instance, where the actual commission of guilt is in question, a man who *fears God* is not at liberty."

At a subsequent day, amid darkened prospects, in reply to one who insisted that the whole business be postponed, he exclaims with indignation against "the dry, calm way in which gentlemen are accustomed to speak of the sufferings of others. The question suspended ! Is the desolation of wretched Africa suspended ? Are all the complicated miseries of this wretched trade suspended ? Is the work of death suspended ? No, sir, I

will not delay this motion, and I call upon the House not to insult the forbearance of Heaven by delaying this tardy act of justice !”

IX.

Religious Progress.

IN 1792 Mr. Wilberforce shared a house at Clapham with Henry Thornton, the youngest son of his deceased relative. Gradually, in this neighborhood, there grew up around him a chosen circle of endeared associates. He was now entering the period of middle life, and while he stood high in public estimation, there were perhaps few men living who were richer in personal friends. The fascination of his social powers in part accounts for this, but more especially his own frank and affectionate spirit. Love, it is said, begets love, and an illustration of this may be found in the group of friends in whom he was accustomed to confide. In the successes even of his political life, there was

always a heartiness of congratulation, a peculiar warmth and grace of sympathy. This at each period of his history can hardly fail to be observed.

But to one who studies the memorials of his life a more striking feature is found in the increase of the religious spirit. If even in its beginnings, in the first freshness of the heavenly gift, it was marked by earnestness and vitality, it existed now in increased strength. There is in its maturer manifestations an element of calmness, of trust, of laying hold on God, which marks an advance. From time to time as we proceed, it is plain that this divine principle increased in depth and serenity, taking at length entire possession, "leavening the whole man." Not in vain had he striven, amid the bustle of business, the turmoil of public life, still to find time for prayer, for the study of God's word, for religious meditation. Not in vain had been his endeavor, amid the temptations incident to his allotted sphere, "to set the

Lord always before him"—“to take hold of his strength.”

“Few men,” writes Henry Thornton, with reference to this period, “have been blessed with worthier or better friends than have fallen to my lot. Mr. Wilberforce stands at the head of these, for he was the friend of my youth. I owed much to him in every sense at my first coming out in life ; for his enlarged mind, his affectionate and condescending manners, and his very superior piety, were exactly calculated to supply what was wanting to my improvement, and my establishment in a right course.”—“When I entered life, I saw a great deal of dishonorable conduct among people who made great profession of religion. In my father’s house I met persons of this sort. This so disgusted me, that had it not been for the admirable pattern of consistency and disinterestedness which I saw in Mr. Wilberforce, I should have been in danger of a sort of infidelity.”

The social habits of Mr. W. and his views of duty connected therewith, have already appeared. These were now however carefully and conscientiously reviewed. He still felt that his was a public walk, yet would withdraw from others when he could without rudeness.

“Taken in,” he writes, “to dine with a vast company at W. Smith’s. Dr. Aiken, Gillies, Mr. and Mrs. Barbauld, Helen Maria Williams, Mackintosh, Mr. Belsham, Mr. Sabbatiere, Mr. and Mrs. Towgood. I was not sufficiently guarded in talking about religion after dinner. Mackintosh talked away. He spoke most highly of Pitt’s slave-trade speech. Came home as if hunted to Thornton’s family party, and much struck with the difference. I threw out some things which may perhaps be of use.”

25th. “Had a long conversation with Pearson, on the proper measure of a Christian’s living in society, whether religious or worldly. He was very strong for solitude,

and speaks of the benefit he personally has received from it. I talked with him very openly, and was much struck with what he said.”—“He strongly pressed solitude, from reason, Scripture, and his own personal experience. I believe he is right, and mean to seek more quiet and solitude than I have done.”—“Read Howe ‘on Delighting in God,’ and much affected by it.”

On another occasion he says : “Let me deal honestly with myself in this matter, and if, on further trial, I find reason to believe that I ought to lead a more sequestered life, may I not dread the imputation of singularity. If from my extreme weakness this public company-keeping life cannot be made consistent with a heavenly frame of mind, I think I ought to retire more. Herein and in all things may God direct me, but let me strive more against my corruptions, and particularly not straiten prayer.”—“Let me universally distrust myself, but let me throw myself at the feet of Christ, as an undone

creature, distrusting, yea, despairing of myself, but firmly relying upon Him. ‘Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ ‘They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.’”

In the early days of his religious life he had lived so much in society that he had, without doubt, increased the conflicts of the way. Yet had he learned to make this subservient to higher ends. Not seeking singularity, conforming in indifferent things to the customs of those around him, winning the hearts of others by his own kindly spirit, he could yet show himself, when occasion called, the reprover of sin. His companions came in time to understand this. They learned that he was in earnest. They knew that serious topics could not be spoken of with lightness—that if the remonstrance did not at once rise to his lips it was very likely withheld for the leisure that would commit the reproof to writing, thus rendering the

impression more lasting. To those who spoke lightly or profanely, this latter was his custom. By this, he has said, he never lost a friend, and but once endangered the continuance of good will. "I wrote to the late Sir —, and mentioned to him this bad habit. He sent me in reply an angry letter, returning a book that I had given him, and asking for one he had given me. Instead of it I sent him a second letter of friendly expostulation, which so won him over that he wrote to me in the kindest tone, and begged me to send him back again the book he had so hastily returned."

In the midst of the engagements of public life he remembers the resolutions formed in solitude. "I will watch and pray," he says, "or God may punish my carelessness by suffering me to fall into sin."

The abolition question at this time was becoming beset with difficulties. The appeal was made now to the people at large, to the moral sympathies of the educated and religious

classes. "I wish you and all other country laborers," wrote Mr. Wilberforce to Mr. Hey, "to consider yourselves not as having concluded, but as only beginning your work ;" adding these memorable and suggestive words : *"It is on the general impression and feeling of the nation we must rely, and not on the political conscience of the House of Commons."*

The war with France at this time, to which Mr. Wilberforce had been opposed, occasioned a temporary estrangement between the prime-minister and himself. The intimacy in which he had lived with Mr. Pitt, his strong affection for that great man, rendered a disagreement exquisitely painful. But from the warlike tone of the administration he strongly dissented, to the no small annoyance of the minister. This feeling was shared by Wilberforce, who wrote many years afterward, with reference to this : "No one who has not seen a good deal of public life, and felt how difficult and painful it is to differ

from those with whom you wish to agree, can judge at what an expense of feeling such duties are performed." A period of personal estrangement followed this opposition. This, however, could not last. He writes in his journal: "Met Pitt for the first time since our political difference—I think both meaning to be kind to each other—both a little embarrassed."

The war proved not so short as the minister had hoped; and on this subject, two years after, his friend mentions: "A letter from Pitt, wishing me to come up, hoping we should agree." He found at this time that the premier had adopted his own views, and earnestly desired that the country should be at peace.

At this time, however (1793), another important subject claimed his attention. This was no other than the introduction of Christianity into the British dominions in the East.

During the latter part of the last century a large measure of the attention of Parliament was absorbed in East Indian affairs. Though the British rule did not then as now include the vast empires of Southern Asia, yet millions of pagans were subjects of her king, and could be looked upon in no other light by the political rulers of the day and the thoughtful minds of the nation. Already had the duty of imparting the blessings of the Gospel to those regions begun to move the hearts of Christians. Ever awake to the interests of Christianity and the good of his fellow-men, Mr. Wilberforce seized a suitable opportunity to call the attention of Parliament to this great subject. Having given much attention to the matter, and consulted with others, on the fourteenth of May, 1793, he brought before the House certain resolutions having for their object the "religious improvement" of the natives of India. It was proposed that the government take this matter into its own hands, and extend the

benefits of the religious establishment to these its benighted subjects. This was presented with much power of argument and eloquence. "It is not meant," said Mr. Wilberforce, "to break up by violence existing institutions, and force our faith upon the natives of India, but gravely, silently and systematically to prepare the way for the diffusion of religious truth. Fraud and violence are directly repugnant to the genius and spirit of our holy faith, and would frustrate all attempts for its diffusion."

Notwithstanding his efforts, it failed. He writes to Mr. Gisborne: "The East India directors and proprietors have triumphed. All my clauses were last night struck out on the third reading of the bill, and our territories in Hindostan, twenty millions of people included, are left in the undisturbed and peaceable possession, and committed to the providential protection of—Brahma."

Seldom had Wilberforce been so deeply disappointed. Yet in God he found refuge.

In his private journal he writes, with reference to this most trying termination of his efforts in this matter: "Yet where can I go but to thee, blessed Jesus? Thou hast the words of eternal life. I am no more worthy to be called thy son; yet receive me, and deliver me from all my hinderances, and by the power of thy renewing grace render me meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Surely, we may exclaim, on reading this little passage, so replete with filial trust, humility, and love, the defects of the servants of God are better than the triumphs of the world.

But India, though uncared for by her conquerors, was remembered by God. Christian hearts were inspired to seek her good. Prayer without ceasing was made for those who dwelt in the shadow of death. "We have done too little for the souls of men and for the honor of our great Master," was the language of the pious. At a meeting of the

associated Baptist churches at Nottingham, not far from this very time, had William Carey addressed his brethren in the ministry on this topic. In the beautifully prophetic words of Isaiah, he called upon the assembled people of God: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the earth, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." The inspiring idea of a mission to the heathen was unfolded. In the hearts of those who listened a responsive chord was touched, which has since vibrated through the world. On the thirteenth of June, 1793, less than one month after the parliamentary rejection, Carey and his associate sailed for the East. From that day to the present, India has never been without its missionaries.

Nor was this all. The subject had been agitated, and the London Missionary Society

came into existence. This also, after a few years, was followed by the "Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East." Thus the angel having the everlasting gospel pursued his onward flight, though statesmen and legislators planned for the present state of existence only. Thus evermore is fulfilling the Saviour's prayer concerning his people, "that they all may be one," though in the present state of twilight ignorance they mistake outward separations for real differences. What Wilberforce failed to accomplish in the House of Commons, Carey and Fuller were permitted to commence at Nottingham, God in the mysteries of his wisdom, oftentimes choosing the simplest means to produce the sublimest results.

La Fayette.

THE name of La Fayette is to every American a familiar sound. The favored friend of Washington, the ardent lover of liberty, the helper in the war that made us a nation. It is one of those charmed words on which we delight to dwell. Never to be forgotten by those who witnessed them, are the scenes of his visit in after life, in the midst of a green old age, to the people he had loved in youth. It was indeed a good and a comely thing for the United States, in the progress of their vigorous youth, having won an honorable standing among the nations of the earth, to extend warm from the heart an invitation to this friend of her early and adverse days, to visit her shores yet once more,

the guest of the people. He came, and a nation rose to greet him. And still, in thousands of hearts, there yet lives the image of that goodly form, and gracious countenance, and soul-kindling glance, embalmed with associations that even then linked him with the mighty dead, and made his name a part of our country's history.

But at the time of which we are writing, La Fayette was in prison. Known through Europe as a lover of constitutional freedom, his just and noble spirit spurned at the excesses of the French Revolution. In those times of phrenzy and bloodshed, a true advocate for the rights of man had no place on which to stand. When it became evident to La Fayette that the party in power actually purposed to put the king and queen to death, he threw the whole weight of his influence into an attempt to stem the tide of popular fury. Quitting the army, he appeared before the Convention. But his efforts were in vain. So far were that body

from listening to him, that they sent messengers to his own soldiers to prevail on them to arrest their commander. Forced to flee, he barely escaped with his life. On the borders of Prussia he was seized and confined in the dungeons of the fortress of Olmutz. This dreary confinement was only relieved by the presence of Madame de la Fayette, who petitioned that she might be allowed to join her husband. The sternness of Austrian rule only allowed this on condition of her becoming herself a captive. The noble daughter of one of the most ancient families of France chose this castle prison for her abode. This captivity had now lasted four years. The illustrious character of the prisoner, his high rank, and the spotlessness of his fame, caused his detention to become of sufficient moment to justify national interference.

Austria, being at that time in friendly alliance with England, it was supposed that a request from the Court of St. James, would

be heard and responded to by their confederates. A romantic interest seems to have attached itself to the whole life of the American champion, and many throughout the British realm were anxious for his liberation. "While your friend (Mr. Pitt) remains in power," wrote Granville Sharpe to Mr. Wilberforce in 1796, "I have one favor to solicit. I ask it for the sake of his own credit, as well as for the credit of his partners in the administration, that they may no longer lie under the suspicion of being accessory to the oppression of a worthy man, whose intentions were always disinterested and patriotic ; I mean the Marquis de la Fayette, who, with his amiable family, (I believe,) are still most cruelly and unjustifiably detained in an Austrian Bastile ! My application to you in favor of this unhappy gentleman has, I trust, some grounds of propriety.

"He was a leading member of the late society in France for the abolition of the slave trade ; and I received likewise several

very sensible and humane letters from himself, as an individual, on that subject, to which, I believe, he was very sincerely attached ; and on that ground alone I earnestly beg the immediate exertion of your best interest with your friend, while he continues in power, that an application may be made for the release of the unfortunate Marquis and his oppressed family.”

That this letter was the expression of a feeling somewhat widely extended we can not doubt. It could not be but the mind of Wilberforce would be awake to the merits of a case like this, and a spirit uniformly generous as his, would be ready, when called upon, to espouse the cause, and seek the release of the illustrious captive. In the early days of his political career he had formed in Paris an acquaintance with La Fayette, and in later years his labors had been cheered by the exertions of this patriotic Frenchman, to free his own country from the disgrace of the slave trade.

Still the subject was not without its difficulties. By many the name of La Fayette was cast out as evil. His strong sympathies with liberty were, according to the prevalent views of that day, naturally confounded with license—with misrule—with murder. Even the sagacious mind of Edmund Burke made no scruple of charging on the captive of Olmutz “the abundant harvest of crimes and miseries” of which he was said to have “sown the seeds.”

A motion was brought forward on this subject by General Fitzpatrick for an address to the Crown. This was, however, bitterly opposed, and as little could be said in opposition to the motion, a tone of ridicule was adopted. Quick to perceive the moods of men with whom he had to deal, Mr. Wilberforce anticipated the peculiar storm that was rising around him. But he was not to be deterred. His own mind responded to the call of humanity, and on that broad ground he presented it to the House. “Never,” he

writes with regard to the affair, "did I rise to speak with more reluctance. I expected all the ridicule that followed; and when Dundas by a happy peculiarity of expression talked of my amendment as designed to catch the 'straggling humanity' of the House, there was a perfect roar of laughter. However I felt sure that we were bound to use our influence with our allies to mitigate as far as possible the miseries of war."

Again he says on this subject: "It was late in the day before I had an opportunity of delivering my sentiments, and when at last an opening did present itself it was toward the close of a debate, when the patience of the House was exhausted. It may perhaps be a confession, but I must frankly acknowledge that the performance of an act of duty has seldom been set about at a greater cost of present feeling than by myself, when under the circumstances I rose, conscious that I should immediately draw on me the loud derision of a very full majority

of the House of Commons. I am thankful that I was not weak enough to be deterred by foreseeing the consequences that were to ensue ; but trifling as the occasion really was, in the circumstances of the case, it was, at the moment, a severe trial of principle."

This sensitive dread of ridicule and determined disregard of it when in the way of duty form an instructive picture. Nor was the latter wholly without reward. Long afterward he received from La Fayette a special assurance of his gratitude. "Tell him," was the message, "that in my life I can never forget the feeling with which I read that speech in the dreary dungeon of Olmutz."

During this winter (1797) the abolition question, again brought forward, was again defeated. The bill for the gradual abolition should have before this taken effect, but was obstructed by the efforts of those who, whatever their professions, were at heart desirous of prolonging the days of the slave-trade.

From the diary of Mr. Wilberforce during this busy season we extract the resolves by which he was guided: "To redeem time more; to keep God more in view, and Christ and all he has suffered for us, and the unseen world, where Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God, interceding for his people. I would grow in love and tender solicitude for my fellow-creatures' happiness; in preparedness for any events which may befall me in this uncertain state. I may be called to sharp trials, but Christ is able to strengthen me for the event, be it what it may."

Not long after this was penned, there appeared in a Cambridge newspaper a series of charges directed against him of an absurdly malignant character. "There seems," wrote Dr. Milner, "to be something systematic meant against you. It amounts to downright hatred and persecution."

"My being moved by this falsehood," he wrote in his journal, "is proof that I am too much interested about worldly favor. Yet I

endeavor, I hope, to fight against the bad tempers of revenge and pride which it is generating by thinking of all our Saviour suffered in the way of calumny. Let me humbly watch myself, so far as this false charge may suggest matter for amendment; and also I ought to be very thankful that, with many faults of which I am conscious, it has pleased God that I have never been charged justly, or where I could not vindicate myself. Thou, Lord, knowest my integrity, and it will finally appear; meanwhile let my usefulness not be prevented by this report, or that of my book thwarted."

"THE PRACTICAL VIEW."*

The "book" which had been at intervals for four years in a state of preparation was now completed. He speaks of it as a "tract," but it had swelled into a volume. Indeed this work, now a standard one among

* An Elegant Edition of this Work, on large type, has recently been issued by the Publishers of this Volume.

religious writings, seems, in its beginning at least, to have been undertaken with a view to the good of those to whom he was personally known. These, from his public position and accessible habits, his frank and genial temper, were a numerous throng. To these he wished to make known fully the inner principles that molded his conduct. He would fain reveal to others the hidden strength that guided his way. He called it his "manifesto," and said that now that he had clearly made known his views of the all-importance, the absolute necessity of religion, he felt that he had committed himself more decidedly even than before to the service of Christ. He also had fully expressed his hopes for the safety of the country in troublous times.

Before the book came out, his friends were anxious for the result. Dr. Milner endeavored to dissuade him from the enterprise. "A person who stands so high for talent," wrote David Scott, "must risk much in point of fame, at least, by publishing upon a subject

on which there have been the greatest exertions of the greatest genius."

Nor was the publisher without apprehensions of the safety of proceeding in the business. "You intend to put your name to this work?" he inquired of the author. "Then I think we may venture on five hundred copies." Within a few days these were all sold; and within half a year five editions had been called for.

The friends of Wilberforce were delighted at his success, and letters of congratulation flowed in upon him. "I heartily thank you," wrote Lord Muncaster, "for your book. As a friend I thank you for it; as a man I doubly thank you; but as a member of the Christian world I render you all gratitude and acknowledgment. I thought I knew you well, but I know you better now." "I am truly thankful to God," wrote Bishop Porteus, alluding to the troublous aspect of the times, "that a work of this nature has made its appearance at this tremendous

moment. I shall offer up my fervent prayers to God that it may have a powerful and extensive influence on the hearts of men, and in the first place upon my own, which is already humbled, and will, I trust, in time be sufficiently awakened by it." "I can converse with you now as often as I please," wrote John Newton, "by your late publication, which I have now read through, with increasing satisfaction, a third time. I mean not to praise you, but I must and will praise the Lord for your book, which I can not doubt will be accompanied by a Divine blessing, and productive of happy effects. I hope it will be useful to me, and of course to those who attend my ministry."

Amid these expressions of delighted friendship, grateful indeed to so affectionate a heart, we find the author diligently looking to his own way. "How careful ought I to be," he writes, "that I may not disgust men by an inconsistency between the picture of a Christian which I draw, and which I exhibit !

How else can I expect the blessing of God upon my book? May his grace quicken me!"

The demand for the "Practical View" was indeed, almost, at that day, without a parallel. It was not merely among personal and religious friends that it was appreciated. Numbers in the gay world paused in the pursuits of pleasure to read those pages from the pen of one, known to have been once as thoughtless as themselves. Political men were curious to know what so distinguished a servant of the public would say on topics usually left to the ministers of religion. Many read the book coming from such a source, that would never have opened it otherwise. Its circulation became world-wide. In America edition after edition followed so quickly, as to exceed in number the repeated reprints of London. "In India," wrote Henry Martyn, in 1807, "Wilberforce is eagerly read." Translated into the principal languages of Europe, its influence was thus still farther extended.

But the most precious triumphs of the work consisted neither in the approbation of valued friends, nor in the extent of the author's fame. Instances were not wanting in which persons ascribed to the perusal of this work their first perception of the reality of heart religion.

The Rev. Legh Richmond writes: "To Mr. Wilberforce's 'View of Practical Christianity' I owe, through God's mercy, the first sacred impression which I ever received, as to the spiritual nature of the Gospel system, the vital character of personal religion, the corruption of the human heart, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. As a young man recently ordained, I had commenced my labors too much in the spirit of the world." This book "convinced me of my error, led me to the study of the scriptures with an earnestness to which I had hitherto been a stranger; humbled my heart, and brought me to seek the love and blessing of that Saviour, who alone can afford a peace which

the world can not give. I know too well what has passed in my heart, for now a long period of time, not to feel and confess, that to this incident I was indebted originally for those solid views of Christianity on which I rest my hope for time and eternity."

Two years after the publication, Wilberforce wrote in his journal: "Heard to-day of a clergyman in the Isle of Wight to whom my book was blessed. Oh, praise! praise! Subsequently he resided for a season in the neighborhood of Legh Richmond's parsonage, of whom he speaks as "most affectionate and warm-hearted." Among the many instances of the good effects produced by this volume, this is adduced, being in itself a host. The ministry and writings of the author of the "Dairyman's Daughter," "Young Cottager," etc., are too well known to need comment.

One of the greatest men of the age which he adorned, employed himself, shortly before his death, in reading the same volume. This

was no other than Edmund Burke. "If I live," said he, "I will thank Wilberforce for having sent such a book into the world." Dying, he committed the expression of his gratitude to another.

"Let me recommend you to open on the last section of the fourth chapter," was the advice of the author to Mr. Pitt ; "you will there see wherein the religion which I espouse differs practically from the common system. Also the sixth chapter has almost a right to perusal, being the basis of all politics, and particularly addressed to such as you."

A friend who at this season was with Mr. Wilberforce at Bath, remarks the simplicity of manner with which these numerous congratulations were received. The mind thoroughly intent on duty can not easily be drawn from its own appropriate sphere. The inward life of the soul in its holy and vigorous action, reduces all that is outward to its proper proportion of influence. In this may be found the secret of his equanimity. In

his private journal he writes : “ April 14th, Good Friday. I trust I feel true humiliation of soul from a sense of my own unworthiness, a humble hope of the favor of God in Christ.”—“ Some desire to devote myself to Him who has so dearly bought me ; some degree of that universal love and good will which the sight of Christ crucified is calculated to inspire. If the contemplation *here* can produce these effects on my hard heart, what will the vision of Christ in glory produce hereafter ? I feel something of pity too for a thoughtless world, and O what gratitude is justly due from me (the vilest of sinners, when compared with the mercies I have received) who have been brought from darkness into light, and I trust from the pursuit of earthly things to the prime love of the things that are above ! O purify my heart still more by thy grace ! Quicken my dead soul, and purify me by thy Spirit, that I may be changed from glory to glory, and be made even here in some degree to resemble my heavenly Father.”

XI.

His Marriage.

HITHERTO Mr. Wilberforce seems to have acted up to the resolve of Queen Elizabeth on her coronation-day, when she declared herself *wedded* to her country, and that no other love should be admitted to share in or divide her affections.

“I doubt,” he wrote to a friend, near the close of 1796, “if I shall ever change my situation. The state of public affairs concurs with other causes in making me believe *I must finish my journey alone!* I much differ from you in thinking that a man such as I am has no reason to apprehend some violent death or other. I do assure you that in my own case I think it highly probable. Then consider how extremely I am occupied.

What should I have done had I been a family man for the last three weeks? But I must not think of these matters now, it makes me feel my solitary state too sensibly. Yet this state has some advantages; it makes me *feel* that I am not at home, and imposes on me the duty of looking for and hasting to a better country."

On this subject, however, a change came over his spirit. From the weariness of public service he sought the retirement of a domestic circle all his own, a sharer of his heart—a wife—a home.

At Bath he had become strongly attached to one whom he thought well fitted to become his companion through life. "I believe her," he says, "to be a real Christian, affectionate, sensible, rational in habits, moderate in desires and pursuits; capable of bearing prosperity without intoxication, and adversity without repining. If I have been precipitate, forgive me, O God! But if, as I trust, we shall both love and fear and serve

Thee, thou wilt bless us according to thy sure word of promise."

He was married on the 30th of May, 1797, to Miss Barbara Ann, eldest daughter of Isaac Spooner, Esq., of Elmdon Hall, in the county of Warwick. This chosen companion of his future way seems to have been of lovely deportment and loving heart, with religious and benevolent sympathies strongly akin to his own.

His very first visit in company with his bride was at Cowslip Green. "By this coming," writes Hannah More to a friend, "he repaid a sort of vow made many years since—you will think it not amiss to make his agreeable wife set out with such an act of humility." He himself records the enjoyment derived from this journey, the welcome of the Misses More, and more especially the prosperity of the schools at Cheddar. An early ride on Sunday morning enabled him to visit these, and also the schools of some of the neighboring parishes. Cheddar!—the very

spot over whose desolation, eight years before, he had wept and prayed, and in behalf of whose destitute ones he had awakened to effort the energies of the ladies of Cowslip Green. Now the labors of the Misses More had penetrated far and wide, reaching to many parishes, and causing the desert to rejoice. The partakers of the benefits of these schools now might be numbered by thousands, her welcome and honored guest having aided her constantly with pecuniary means, as well as with the scarcely less precious gift of countenance and sympathy.

Ever twined all too closely are life and death, and the rejoicings of the bridal were followed by a summons to Hull, to sympathize with his afflicted sister. She had been married to the Rev. Dr. Clarke, of Hull, who had died suddenly. Mr. Wilberforce spent three weeks with his mother and sister, and then returned to London.

In his journal he writes, on the occasion of

his birthday : "I have the utmost cause for self-humiliation, for gratitude, for grateful confidence, for earnest breathings after usefulness. I have no time to write ; but let me use the few minutes I have in praying to God in Christ, the Author of my mercies, beseeching Him to hear me, to fill me with spiritual blessings, and enable me to live to his glory. My marriage and the publication of my book are the great events of the past year. In both I see much to humble me and fill my mouth with praises. Let me resign myself to God, who has hitherto led me by ways that I knew not."

Again, to his friend Mr. Macauley he writes : "My cup was before teeming with mercies, and it has at length pleased God to add the only ingredient that was wanting to its fullness. In this instance, as in many others, His goodness has exceeded my utmost expectations, and I ought, with renewed alacrity and increased gratitude, to devote myself to the service of my Benefactor. I

am half ready to blame myself for thus descanting on the topic I have chosen, but it is the strongest proof I can give you of my friendship, that I have opened myself to you on a subject on which, in speaking to a mere acquaintance, I should have been the least likely to dwell."

In a letter to his sister, after alluding to his visit to Hull, he says: "Greatly indeed have I reason to be thankful for the signal blessing which Providence last year conferred on me. My dearest wife bears my hurrying way of life with great sweetness; but it would be a sort of jail-delivery to her, no less than to myself, to escape from the tumult of this bustling town and retire to the enjoyment of country scenes and country occupations. But I am well aware that it is not right for me to indulge in such reveries. My business is cut out for me, and Providence has greatly blessed me in the means of being cheered under it; which means I should do wrong to pervert into a source of indolent

self-enjoyment, flinching from my collar and refusing to draw my load because a little weary of being in the harness. At all times when one feels this sense of weariness and longs for quietness and peace, one should endeavor to make it subservient to the purpose of raising one's mind heavenward, and of establishing a practical feeling of the vanity and transitoriness of all human things, and of this life being but a passage, and our home that "rest that remaineth for the people of God."

The widowed sister of Wilberforce subsequently became the wife of one of his dearest friends, long one of the most valued of his correspondents, and an influential and ardent fellow-laborer in the cause of African freedom—James Stephen. Confidence and brotherly love, even till life's latest day, mark the letters of these two, whose hearts were linked together first by friendship and afterward by family connection. The letters of Mr. Ste-

phen reveal a warmth of affection and richness of religious sentiment, mingling at times with a vein of humor and quaintly original speculation. The correspondents of Hannah More, as well as those of Wilberforce, number many names famous in the literary world, but the letters of Mr. Stephen are among the best in her collection. He was the author of several valuable works on African slavery, particularly an able pamphlet entitled, "England enslaved by her own Colonies." A residence of some length in the West Indies had given him a minute knowledge of the workings of the system of colonial slavery, and in the House of Commons, as well as with his pen, he was ever ready to support the cause of abolition.

A letter of pleasant and tender reminiscences, addressed to Wilberforce in 1828, is full of interest. At the period to which Mr. Stephen refers, he was himself under the pressure of affliction. We give a little extract: "You probably do not recollect, but I

still do with affectionate gratitude, a visit that you made me in Sloane Street, this day exactly thirty-four years ago. It was a very useful one. This is one of the anniversaries on which I remember sorrows that this life cannot compensate, but trace from them the wonderful and beneficent ways of that divine Benefactor, who,

‘Behind a frowning Providence
Oft hides a smiling face.’

“I sincerely wished for a long time after to drop all intercourse with you and the friends that surrounded you. I disliked all society except that of my poor orphans, and the kind friends who took charge of them. I wished and expected soon to die ; and besides had a blamable aversion for the company of those who stood higher in rank or fortune than myself, especially for the Pittite aristocrats whom I generally met at your table. But you, my kind friend, would not suffer me to forsake you ; and the recollection of your

tender, generous conduct at that crisis of my affliction was a tie that bound my heart to you, till I found, two or three years after, another bond of attachment.”—“Nor was your coming at that crisis, and your subsequent compassionate and affectionate conduct a needless link in the chain of events that led to my union with her.”

XII.

Troublous Times.

IN 1797 Mr. Wilberforce wrote on the failure of his motion with regard to the slave trade. "I have been too long used to it to feel much disappointment." From year to year had the subject been presented with a steady perseverance which would not be deterred from its object. Yet its enemies had gained strength. Gradually had opposition assumed a bolder front. Among the circumstances that combined to frustrate the efforts in behalf of the slave, was the unsettled and troubled state of public affairs. The French Revolution, beginning in the love of freedom, and ending in unbridled license, convulsed Europe with horror. Blood had flowed like water in the streets of Paris, and the king

and queen, with multitudes of the nobility, had perished by the guillotine. Principles, calculated to disorganize society, to put down all that was venerable and sacred, as well as all that was unwelcome or oppressive, found, to some extent, advocates in England. French philosophy had found entrance into many minds. Revolutionary principles had been compressed into sixpenny pamphlets, and sold about the country. Greatly to the injury of the cause of abolition, many of these disorganizers were noisy advocates for its success. The cause itself fell into disgrace. In the minds of many it was connected with revolution, with misrule, with the undermining of the existing customs of society. They would hear nothing of it. They hated even the name. The privileged classes feared the rising of the people, the nobles trembled in their high places. From seats of power and influence came a deadly opposition to every thing that could possibly be connected with the madness of revolu-

tionary reform. Religion trembled at the audacious front that infidelity and even atheism had assumed ; royalty felt the precariousness of its own grasp upon the scepter. The time had been when George the Third, at his levee, would pleasantly inquire, "How go on your black clients, Mr. Wilberforce?" But this state of feeling had been followed, on the part of the royal family, by one far less favorable. Much, very much, did the advocates of the African cause suffer, from being identified with the Jacobins of their day. The insurrections of St. Domingo and Dominica were laid to their influence ; the opponents of freedom not scrupling to use them as arguments that their worst predictions were now being fulfilled.

That Mr. Wilberforce was the unflinching friend of order and religion, that he was a strongly-attached member of the National Church, that his piety had here found its home and nurture, might go far to shield him personally from these imputations, but with

many of his followers it was far otherwise. The evil of all great reforms, that of enlisting unworthy advocates, seemed peculiarly to beset the cause of African freedom.

Besides the contest had now become an old one. The eloquence of its advocates alone made its mention tolerable. Wilberforce, upheld by such supporters as Fox and Pitt, kept it alive in the House of Commons, when in other hands all allusion to it might have been overruled. These were the dark days of English abolition. "What tempests," wrote Wilberforce at the opening of the nineteenth century, "rage around, and how are we urged to seek for that peaceful haven, which alone can insure real security and happiness !"

At this time a plan was in process for the establishment of a public journal of a religious character. It was to contain also "a moderate degree of political and common intelligence." In setting this forward, Mr.

Wilberforce was much occupied. As the result of this, we find the "Christian Observer," issued in January of 1802. Several articles in its earlier numbers were from his own pen, and from that of Mr. Henry Thornton.

The various other schemes of benevolent effort which occupied his attention, may be gathered from his journal. The "Slave Trade," "Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor," "Proclamation Society," "Sierra Leone," "Condition of Children in Cotton Mills," "Sunday Bill," "Oath Bill," are all mentioned as in turn occupying his attention.

"Never distress yourself, my dear Mary," he writes at another time to a relation, "on the ground of my being put to expense on account of yourself or your near relatives. As it has pleased God, of his good Providence, to bless me with affluence, and to give me the power, and I hope the heart, to assist those who are less gifted with the good

things of the present life, how can I employ them more properly than in near relatives ; and when I strengthen your hands, who are always endeavoring to promote their best interests. You may say to ——— that, on your account, I am willing to take the charge of Charles' education for the next two years."

Again in another letter he adds : "I trust you are comfortably provided as to pecuniary circumstances ; if not, remember that I am your natural resort, as being your near relative and like-minded friend."

We take, at this point, occasion to notice the habits of Mr. Wilberforce, which these extracts, trifling as they are, may help to illustrate. Even his gayest and most thoughtless days had been marked by generous outlays for those less favored by fortune than himself. When, however, he came to regard as a Christian his obligations to serve his fellow-men, these impulsive charities became at once enlarged and systematic. This additional power was obtained by the avoiding

of extravagance, by the giving up of many expenses common to young men of his station and wealth. Early in the Christian life he recognized the duty of self-denial, that the means of doing good might be increased. Previous to his marriage, one fourth of his income seems to have been so employed, and an imperfect record for one year accounts for more than two thousand pounds. From all the scattered items which we are able to glean concerning the extent of his benefactions, speaking in our own currency, we are safe in saying that his annual gifts must have amounted each year, for a large portion of his life, to the sum of ten thousand dollars. This, we are inclined to the opinion, is too low an estimate. In one year of grievous depression and scarcity a much larger sum is expended. He writes, during the year referred to, of "the heavy burden of obtaining relief for our starving manufacturers in the West Riding of Yorkshire." "I thank God that I am able," he writes the same year

(1800) to Miss Hannah More, “without inconvenience, to make an extraordinary exertion ; and as to keeping strictly within one’s income at such a season as this, it is as unreasonable (not to say any thing of its wickedness) as it would be for a man to keep determinately to his ordinary rate of walking when a hungry lioness was at his heels. But we feel for our own safety more than for another’s sufferings. Indifferent health,” he says, “at this time alone prevented” him “from going down into the West Riding to ascertain facts” for himself ; and in consequence of the large call upon his purse he thought of “giving up his villa for a few seasons. I should thus,” he says, “save four or five hundred pounds per annum, which I could give to the poor. Yet to give up the means of receiving friends there, where, by attending family prayers, and in other ways, an impression may be made on them, seems a great concession. And with Broomfield I can, by management, give away one-fourth of my

income. O Lord, guide me aright. But there, or wherever else I am, do Thou grant me Thy Holy Spirit to fill me with every Christian grace, love, joy, peace, long-suffering."

Occasionally we gain a glimpse of the way in which his manner of life was viewed by others. "Our dear and benevolent friend," wrote Dr. Milner, with reference to the poor manufacturers at this gloomy period, "absolutely exhausts his strength on this subject. He is the most feeling soul I ever knew, and also the most patient and indefatigable in endeavoring to lessen the miseries of the people."

But the war-clouds that darken the face of Europe seem about to part, and as a sudden gush of sunlight comes the hope of peace. This prospect is seized upon by Mr. Wilberforce, and a "grand abolition plan" is projected, an agreement among the nations of Europe to prohibit the slave-trade. This year he will not risk a defeat—it shall not be

brought forward in the House : he will exert his chief strength with the officers of the government.

But the king and his cabinet had disagreed. The tried and trusty premier had gone into retirement, and the new ministry was far less vigorous in itself, as well as less favorable to the destruction of the slave-trade. Wilberforce wrote in his diary : " If Mr. Pitt had been minister when this peace was negotiated, the question would have come into discussion ; but Lord Hawkesbury and Mr. Addington could not be persuaded. At last I wrote to both of them very serious letters, telling them I did so to leave it with them solemnly."

Deeply disappointed, he still persisted in his efforts. Though "cast down" he was not "destroyed." The fortunes of war had placed under British rule new and uncultivated islands in the West Indies. Speculation was clamorous that these lands be

improved. They must be stocked with new slaves—fresh importations from Africa. To prevent this no exertion must be spared—every energy of every friend to humanity is needed now, not to do away the trade, but to prevent its increase. “What an eternal blot,” wrote Wilberforce at this time, “would it be on the character of Parliament if, after having resolved by an immense majority that the slave-trade should be gradually abolished, we should enter on the cultivation of a new settlement, the complete peopling of which with negro slaves, reckoning the number always lost in opening uncleared lands, would take nearly a million of human beings.”

The adverse temper of the existing House of Commons could not be doubted. The most that could be done was to wring a reluctant consent from the prime-minister that he would pause a little before opening St. Vincent's and Trinidad for the reception of newly-imported slaves.

While the new administration was forming, the friends of Wilberforce hoped that he might be included among the officers of the cabinet. He himself confesses to some "risings of ambition." "I am too much," he says, "for a Christian, yet not greatly, intruded upon by earthly things, in consequence of these late political changes. Blessed be God for this day of rest and religious occupation, wherein earthly things assume their true size and comparative insignificance ; ambition is stunted, and I hope my affections in some degree rise to things above."

His views of the slave-trade rendered it out of the question to hold office under the circumstances.

"I am returning soon," he wrote from Bath, "to the bustle of London and political life. May God protect me by his grace, and enable me to stand the fiery trial. I shall if I honestly wait on Him.

"Pitt and Rose dined with me quietly to-

day. Pitt very pleasant, and we stayed, chatting politics. What wonderful magnanimity!—wishing to form for Addington the best possible administration. I do not wonder if it be misunderstood. Little minds can not receive the idea—it is too grand for their comprehension. But to one who considers it in all its bearings, and who estimates its full worth, it will appear one of the noblest specimens of true magnanimity.”

A temper so noble could only be understood by being shared. The magnanimity attributed by Wilberforce to his friend might well be transferred by another to himself. Had he *sought* earnestly for himself the splendors of rank and title, the honors of official power, who for a moment doubts that they might have been attained to almost any extent? Had the young ambition that so successfully prompted his first efforts after distinction remained unchastened by a holier principle, who can doubt that his career would have been in accordance with its

beginning—brilliant, successful, lofty? But it would not, it could not have been, as now, sacred, enduring, a remembrance treasured deep in many hearts as proof of what our nature may become under the moulding influence of the eternal and gracious God.

But only through conflicts can the soul attain its strength; and at this point of time, laying open his inmost heart, do we find the *Christian* writing words of sorrow that on these particular subjects “his feelings do not always correspond with his judgment,” that though “comparatively indifferent” in his “cool estimate of the things of this life,” he has yet become “soiled and worldly-minded,” though convinced that “retired domestic life is by far the most happy.”

In this dubious state of mind he will not stay, for he knows well that for the soul’s lassitude there is a remedy. He resolves that he will apply himself even with more vigor than before to the divine employ of *walking with God*.

He adds: "Though in the main I have thought myself pursuing the course chalked out for me by Providence, and with a diligence prompted and enjoined by the injunctions of Scripture, yet I suspect that I had better allot more time, say two hours, or an hour and a half, to religious exercises daily (beside Sundays), and try whether, by so doing, I can not preserve a frame of spirit more habitually devotional; a more lively sense of unseen things; a warmer love of God, and a greater degree of hungering and thirsting after righteousness; a heart less prone to be soiled with worldly cares, designs, passions and apprehensions, and a real, undissembled longing for heaven, its pleasures and its purity.

'I know all external means are nothing without the quickening Spirit; but the Scripture enjoins constant prayer, and the writings and examples of all good men suggest and enforce the necessity of a considerable portion of meditation, and other religious exercises for

maintaining the spiritual life vigorous and flourishing. Let me therefore make the effort in humble reliance on Divine grace. God, if he will, can turn the hearts of men, and give me favorable opportunities, and enable me to use them, and more than compensate for all the hours taken from study, business, civility, and devoted to Him. O give me but a single heart and a single eye, fixed on thy favors, and resolutely determined to live to thy glory."

Soon after we find him busy upon "a plan for the education of the lower orders."

The public execution of a young man for forgery at this time had the effect greatly to strengthen, in the mind of Wilberforce, a long-cherished disapprobation of the usual haste in inflicting the penalty of the law. This case was one of great affliction. The condemned person was the son of a clergyman; his widowed mother had come to London on his behalf, and much sympathy had been excited. "He had been patronized," Mr. Wilberforce

wrote to Mr. Babington, “by the Marquis of Buckingham, Windham and others, and being dissipated and profuse beyond his means, is now under sentence of death, and sure to suffer. To be short, we trust it has pleased God to bless the means which we have used, and that the poor man is a true convert. Providentially he has had far more time than usual for preparation, and, as he remarked himself when I was with him the other day, he has enjoyed much more space and leisure for religious consideration than if he had been lying on a sick-bed.”*

The hopes entertained that this mournful period of leisure had been improved rendered the brief time usually allowed in such cases a thing of comment among those interested for the fate of the unfortunate prisoner. At one time Mr. Wilberforce wished to bring the matter before Parliament. “To bring it for-

* Subsequently to this we find Mr. Wilberforce giving attention to a bill for lessening the number of capital punishments.

ward would lead," he replied, when pressed upon the subject, "to much profane ribaldry, and no good result. You could only argue it on grounds to which the great mass of members are altogether strangers." Carefully did he guard the interests of religion by respect to times and places, not exposing, by hasty and badly-chosen opportunities, sacred topics to the ridicule of the coarser and sterner spirits with whom he came in contact. Yet that this delicacy was united with boldness his whole life was a proof. Of the very low tone of Christian doctrine sometimes adopted by clergymen he would express his disapprobation by the remark: "I could say as much as that in the House of Commons."

The sound of war was again heard. A message from the king announced the necessity of immediate military preparations. The new administration was but feeble compared with the former. "In almost every department," wrote Mr. Wilberforce to Mr. Babington, "there has been sad mismanagement,

Then my poor slaves ! This king's message has made it improper to bring forward my intended motion. And all this time the wicked abominations of the slave-trade are going on in a greater degree than ever."

At this crisis a change was effected in the king's cabinet, and Mr. Pitt was again placed at the head of public affairs.

In these darkened and troublous times was laid the foundation of the "British and Foreign Bible Society." In the work of circulating the Scriptures Mr. Wilberforce and a few others had been engaged privately, before any organization had been attempted. It was now proposed to combine in this great object the scattered energies of Christians of every name. The catholic aspect of this association appealed to every heart enlarged with true Christian love. He was one of its first founders and fastest friends.

His journal at this time records a narrow escape from drowning, and afterward while on a visit to a friend's house, we find the following :

“Sad work, indeed ! oaths of a minor kind, and much unprofitable talk. Alas ! I would not live at — Place to be subject to this for any consideration.” Again, at another time : “A servant here is dangerously ill. I know they have no objection to my talking with him, yet I feel a sad lukewarmness and even averseness to it. Did Christ feel the same toward me and other poor sinners ?” Again : “I saw the sick man for twenty minutes, and prayed with him.” Similar entries to this last occur almost daily during the remainder of his stay.

The leisure of the ensuing Christmas was marked by self-examination and prayer. He writes : “Give me, O Lord, spiritual understanding ; let me drink of the water of life. To thee, O Lord, I fly for succor ; thy promises are sure, and thou wilt cast out none who come to thee. There is my stay ; otherwise thou mightest well cast me out ; but by commanding us to have grace, to grow in grace, thou showest us that we may. O then

let me rouse myself, lest having preached to others I myself should be a cast-away. I have found my heart much affected by looking at past entries in my journal, and at the idea that to the eye of God all my various crimes, follies and vanities are present in their full, unabated, unsoftened size and character, as they at the time appeared to me. O Lord, enable me to purify myself as thou art pure. I hope I feel deeply humbled at the footstool of God's throne, and prostrate I plead the atoning blood of Christ, and humbly trust in his promises of pardon and of grace. When I look forward to the scene before me, and think how ill I have gone on, I shrink back with dread. But, O Lord, I cast my case on thee, I flee to thee for succor. Saviour of sinners, save me. Help, Lord, help, watch over me, guide and guard me ! Amen."

While his views of himself were thus heart-humbling, those of his friends who saw most intimately "the daily beauty of his life,"

could only give God thanks for the great grace bestowed on him.

The contrast between the modest estimate of himself, and that which his friends and the public made of him, is sometimes very striking. Having addressed a crowded audience at a religious anniversary, while his presence had given a charm to the occasion, and his words of power had subdued the hearts of the multitude, he records with entire simplicity in his journal, that he did "pretty well, and every body kind to me."

"I should like you," said Mr. Stephen, in his own playful vein, "to write a life of yourself, and I would write another, and it would be curious to see the different renderings that would be given to the self-same facts."

Yet our readers have doubtless observed, even of the most depreciating clauses of his daily journalizings, they are not the sweeping accusations of a false humility, but often qualified ; and if progress in the Christian life can be only discerned, it is in all frankness recorded, as well as its opposite.

XIII.

Abolition of the Slave-Trade.

No sooner was the new ministry formed, than the Abolition Bill was again brought forward. Though the change in the government was not the cause of success, yet, in the present state of affairs, it was regarded as a bright omen. To prevent the extension of slavery in the newly-occupied islands, had latterly occupied much time, and also shut out the main question. This was now resumed under more favorable auspices. Several circumstances conspired to strengthen the hands of the friends of Africa. The influence of France was lessened. To her bright, brief dawn of liberty had succeeded the imperial rule of Napoleon, and her philosopher reformers had come to be less

dreaded. Union had been affected between the English and Irish Parliaments, and in both Houses these new members were favorable to abolition. Some of the West Indian body themselves had moderated their opposition, and talked of a compromise. The idea had been broached, that it was possible to overstock the islands with new importations. The prospects of freedom were brightened. To the London Committee were added several names, strong in zeal, and also capable of guiding others. Among those we find the names of Stephen, Macaulay and Brougham. Still, however, there existed an opposition, formidable in numbers, wealth, and rank, in the House, while without, from some who ruled the literary tastes of the community, came an influence scarcely less powerful. The advocates for Africa felt that the time had come for a vigorous and united effort.

On the 30th of May, 1804, Mr. Wilberforce moved the first reading of the Bill. It

passed by a large majority. The friends of the cause gained additional courage. John Newton, now verging in his eightieth year, wrote :

“ Though I can scarcely see the paper before me, I must attempt to express my thankfulness to the Lord, and to offer my congratulations to you, for the success which He has so far been pleased to give to your unwearied endeavors for the abolition of the slave-trade, which I have considered as a mill-stone, sufficient of itself to sink such an enlightened and highly-favored nation as ours to the bottom of the sea.”—“ I have now a new proof of what I always professed to believe, that to prayer, faith, and patient perseverance, all things are possible.”—“ Whether I, who am within two months of entering my eightieth year, shall live to see the accomplishment of the work, is only known to Him in whose hands are all our times and ways ; but the hopeful prospect of its accomplishment will, I trust, give me

daily satisfaction as long as my declining faculties are preserved."

From this time little doubt was felt with regard to the final issue. But that the struggle was not yet over, was apparent to those best acquainted with its perplexities. At the opening of Parliament, the next year, Mr. Wilberforce was urged to put off the presentation. Mr. Pitt wished then, not feeling so firmly fixed in power as before, to put aside all questions that could possibly have the effect to divide his friends. But Mr. Wilberforce absolutely refused. "I will never," said he, "make that holy cause subservient to the interests of a party." The minister could estimate his motives. He writes that Pitt "called on me, and was very kind about it." The Bill was brought in at an early period. The event proved that those who considered the work as done, had been too sanguine. It failed on a second reading, manifestly through the absence of a

few who on former occasions had given it their support. This was a surprise as well as a grief.

“Alas, my dear Muncaster,” wrote Mr. Wilberforce, “from the fatal moment of our defeat on Thursday evening, I have had a damp struck into my heart. I could not sleep on Thursday or Friday night, without dreaming of scenes of depredation and cruelty on the injured shores of Africa, and by a fatal connection diffusing the baleful effects through the interior of that vast continent. I really have had no spirits to write to you. Alas, my friend, in what a world do we live ! Mammon is the God we adore, as much almost as if we actually bowed the knee to his image.”

In January of this year was finished the earthly career of that great statesman—William Pitt. We pause for a moment to record the observations of his friend on this, to him, most affecting event.

“There is something peculiarly affecting

in the time and circumstances of poor Pitt's death. I own I have a thousand times, (aye, times without number,) wished and hoped that a quiet interval would be afforded him, perhaps in the evening of life, in which he and I might confer freely on the most important of all subjects. But the scene is closed—for ever.”

To another friend he writes: “Poor Pitt, I almost believe, died of a broken heart! for it is only due to him to declare, that the love of his country burned in him with as ardent a flame as ever warmed the human bosom, and the accounts from the armies struck a death's blow within.”—“A broken heart! He was in the station the highest for power and estimation in the whole kingdom—the favorite, I believe on the whole, both of king and people. Yes, this man, who died of a broken heart, was First Lord of the Treasury, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The time and circumstances of his death were peculiarly affecting, and I really believe, however in-

credulous you may be, that it dwelt on the minds of the people in London, for—shall I say, as I was going to say, for a whole week? I really never remember any event producing so much apparent feeling. But London soon returned to its gayety and giddiness, and all the world has been busy about his inheritance before the late possessor is laid in his grave. Poor fellow! It is an inexpressible satisfaction to me to be able to reflect, that I never for a moment gave him reason to believe that I had any object whatever of a worldly kind in continuing my friendly connection.”

The new ministry, at the head of which were Mr. Fox and Lord Grenville, favored the abolition cause. The experience of last year had proved that much was to be done. Mr. Wilberforce had for some time designed writing an Address on the Slave-Trade, and in the interval of Parliament set resolutely about it. Facts once well known had, with the lapse of years, passed from the minds of

men. Clarkson, the early and untiring laborer, now with renovated health, set forth in quest of new witnesses, to prove the abominations of the trade, and arouse the energies of its opponents.

A year had not passed since the death of Mr. Pitt, when his great rival was no more. Mr. Fox died in the interval of the two sessions. Both of these master-spirits among men were from the beginning the friends of African freedom. "Two things," said Mr. Fox on his death-bed, "I wish earnestly to see accomplished—peace with Europe, and the abolition of the slave-trade; but of the two I wish the latter."

The great work was not to be stayed by the death of its powerful friends. The pamphlet in preparation by Mr. Wilberforce was designed particularly to produce an influence in the House of Lords. At once bold and conciliatory, it was well adapted for the effect designed, and its influence was manifest in

the discussions of the Upper House. "In admiring your triumph," writes Mr. Hayley, "I also admire the lenity with which you adorn it. You treat your opponents with the mild magnanimity of a British admiral, who, when the thunder of his cannon has reduced the ships of his enemies, exerts his fortitude and skill to save them from utter perdition."

During the progress of the abolition struggle, prolonged as it was, this very feature in the character of its parliamentary advocate had sometimes given offense. The smallest grace, the most obvious justice even, awarded to an opponent, is offensive to the hot-headed partizan. The singular candor that would always state with their due weight the arguments of an adversary, necessarily to some was offensive, for the intrinsic beauty of truth and justice is by the mass even of good men much less plainly discerned than are the lines of party division. Yet was this very candor and benignity of spirit repeatedly the

means of disarming opposition ; and but for its influence, we may well doubt whether the cause of the slave would ever have found a majority in the House of Lords.

The approaching debate called for every exertion. Names of influence in the Upper House were still found in the opposition. The Duke of Clarence had declared openly against the bill, speaking out, as was understood, the sentiments of the reigning family. The friends meantime were on the alert. On the morning of the debate Wilberforce went over the list of peers with Lord Grenville. He could scarce entertain a doubt of success. With the evening the crisis came. The bill was carried by a large majority.

The victory was now regarded as sure.

“I receive,” wrote Wilberforce, “congratulations from all, as if all were done, but I can not be sure. May it please God to give us success.”

But the hour of triumph drew nigh. The bill passed to its second reading in the House

of Commons. The day previous every prospect was in its favor. "Never, surely," wrote he, "had I more cause for gratitude than now, when carrying the great object of my life. O Lord, let me praise Thee with my whole heart !"

Thus he entered the House on the 23d of February, 1807. Never before had that body given such honor to one of its members. When called upon in the address of Sir Samuel Romilly to contemplate the result of the struggle of so many years, to contrast the feelings of the Emperor of the French in all his greatness with one present, who would that night lay his head upon his pillow, and remember that the slave-trade was no more, every eye was turned toward Wilberforce, and the assembled legislators, forgetful of their usual gravity, burst out in acclamations of applause !

"Is it true," asked Mr. Hey, "that the House gave you three cheers at the conclusion of the Solicitor General's speech ?"

“I can only say,” was the reply, “that I was myself so completely overpowered by my feelings, when he touched so beautifully on my domestic reception, (which had been precisely realized a few evenings before, on my return from the House of Lords,) that I was insensible to all that was passing around me.”

The debate proceeded. The opposition of one West India planter roused yet once more the same eloquent voice that near twenty years before had begun its pleadings for Africa. The last opponent was quelled. Then came the voting. The result was an overwhelming triumph.

In fancy we may follow the advocate for abolition to his home. Already his best beloved friends are coming in, wearing each a festival air of joy. Thornton, Macaulay, and Grant, and Stephen, and that earnest, earliest laborer—Granville Sharpe. We call up to the mind's eye the animated form and speaking countenance of the master, radiant with

solemn joy, serene yet sparkling, as one by one these faithful friends speak out their exulting congratulations. One was in that company to whom Wilberforce was for the first time made known, a name since widely known and well beloved—Reginald Heber.

There was after this a slight embarrassment owing to the change in the administration. Again the matter required vigilance. It passed in the House of Lords, and the ministry about to go into retirement made its consummation their last act. Two days after, it received the royal assent, and became a law.

Victory was at last complete. Congratulations flowed in from all sides. "To speak," wrote Sir James McIntosh from the other Indies, "of fame and glory to Mr. Wilberforce would be to use language far beneath him. O what twenty years in the life of one man were those which abolished the slave-trade ! How precious is time ! How valua-

ble and dignified is human life, which in general appears so base and miserable ! How noble and sacred is human nature, made capable of achieving such truly great exploits !”

For himself, the great and favored leader in this holy cause, only in ascriptions of gratitude and praise could he give vent to his emotions. “ Oh what thanks do I owe to the Giver of all good for bringing me in His gracious Providence to this great cause, which at length, after almost nineteen years’ labor, is successful !”

What, indeed, was all the glory won in fields of war by the idol of the French army, compared with this one bloodless victory — this one triumph of those great principles of peace and love, whose Divine Author has declared of himself that he came into the world “ not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them !

XIV.

A Contested Election.

THE attachment of the Yorkshire men to their distinguished representative was strong and ardent. We find, however, when rival candidates were at times opposed to him, seasons of great political excitement occurred. These contested elections served to reveal the extent of the regard entertained toward him by his constituents. The struggle of 1807 was the most remarkable one. Two powerful opponents were in the field at this time, and only the consciousness of a strong hold on the minds and hearts of men could have induced Mr. Wilberforce to have entered the lists under the circumstances. That he had never been a resident in Yorkshire, and also that he had always acted independently of political

parties, were calculated to circumscribe his influence and throw him more directly upon the personal regard, the respect for his character and reputation, which was so largely accorded him.

Five years before this, at an approaching election, he had himself thought of retiring from his arduous position. At that time there was little opposition, but he writes: "I pant for quiet and retirement, and what is more, I entertain serious doubt whether I should not act wisely in retiring from my public station—whether I should not be able to promote the glory of God and the good of my fellow-creatures more in private. My pen might then be employed regularly and assiduously. But I am deterred from yielding to the impulse I feel thus to secede, by the fear of carving for myself."

Again, after a natural allusion to the undesirableness of being "turned out," he adds: "When this should have been conquered, I own I should rejoice in my liberty. However,

I would leave my continuance in public life to Providence, and not retire till its signal be given for my release."

This election, in 1802, had been carried triumphantly, and was thus commented upon by his cousin, Lord Carrington, in a letter which was docketed by Mr. Wilberforce, "kind condolence on my reelection :—" "The event," says the letter, "which has given your other friends so much pleasure, has filled me with sentiments of an opposite nature. No constitution can stand, during the ordinary period of an active life, such exertions as yours have been in the service of York. It would have been better if, like Windham, but without his struggle and defeat, you had taken refuge in a close borough, the means of which I should have been proud to have afforded you."

At the period of the present contest, Mr. Wilberforce evinced far less disposition to retire. The successful issue of the great question, which had occupied so many years,

had probably rather stimulated than satisfied the desire to exert himself for the public good. Other questions of importance were also in the perspective of the future. He therefore, in compliance with the custom which placed the political candidate face to face with his constituents, set off for York, and, narrowly escaping on the journey a serious accident, plunged at once into the contest.

The nomination was in his favor, and the incidental expenses were at once assumed by his friends. On the first day of the election, however, appearances were against him. Some began to despond. But the county had not shown its strength, and the vast muster of freeholders on the third day changed the aspect of things. "Boats," says one, "are proceeding up the river heavily laden with voters; farmers lend their wagons; even donkeys have the honor of carrying voters for Wilberforce, and hundreds are proceeding on foot. No money can convey all the voters,

but if their feelings are aroused his election is secure."

"My being left behind on the poll," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce, on the evening of Friday, "seemed to arouse the zeal of my friends; they exerted themselves, and have mended my condition. You would be gratified to see the affection that is borne me by many to whom I am scarcely or not at all known. I am thankful for the weather," (the preceding days had been stormy and boisterous,) "and indeed I am thankful for a quiet mind, which is placed above the storm."

Of the scene of popular tumult which took place during these election days, we can hardly form an idea. Boisterous applause and as boisterous abuse seemed to be the inevitable lot of the candidate for the public confidence. The assemblies addressed were unruly and tumultuous. He writes: "Latterly they will not hear me." As an instance of the respect in which even here his religious character was held, we find that the Sabbath

was left to him comparatively unmolested. At these times he was able to "bless God that his mind was pretty free from politics." "I was much struck," says one, "to see how totally he had dismissed from his mind all thoughts of the approaching contest. His conversation related entirely to subjects suited to the day. He was speaking particularly about the words 'Being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' and seemed free from any sort of care about what was coming."

The following letter illustrates these remarks. It was addressed to Mrs. Wilberforce :

"Sunday night, May 24.

"I am robbed of the time I meant to spend in writing to you, at least of a great part of it ; but you will be glad to hear that I have spent a pleasant Sunday, though this evening is of necessity passed in my committee-room. I have been twice at the Minster, where the sublimity of the whole scene nearly over-

came me. It is the largest and finest Gothic building probably in the whole world. The city is full of freeholders, who came in such numbers as to fill the whole area of the place (a very large one) where the service is performed, and every seat and pew were filled. I was exactly reminded of the great Jewish passover in the temple, in the reign of Josiah. It is gratifying to say that there was the utmost decency, and not the smallest noise or indecorum, no cockades or distinctive marks. Indeed, I must say, the town is wonderfully quiet considering it is an election time.

“How beautiful Broomfield must be at this moment! Even here the lilacs and hawthorn are in bloom in warm situations. I imagine myself roaming through the shrubbery with you and the little ones; and, indeed, I have joined you in spirit several times to-day, and have hoped we were applying together at the same throne of grace. How merciful and gracious is God to me! Surely the universal kindness that I experi-

ence is to be regarded as a singular instance of the goodness of the Almighty.

“I bless God my mind is calm and serene, and I can leave the event to Him without anxiety ; desiring that, in whatever state I may be placed, I may adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour, and do honor to my Christian profession. But all is uncertain, at least to any human eye. I must say good-night. May God bless you. Kiss the babes, and give friendly remembrances to all family and other friends. Every blessing to you and ours in time and eternity.”

The calm sunshine of the spirit seems, in the midst of this exciting contest, to have been scarcely overclouded. It is comparatively easy in stillness and retirement, and freedom from disturbing causes, to cultivate religious devotion. But while one records that he has heard the candidate repeating to himself the sweet and sacred stanzas beginning :

“The calm retreat, the silent shade
With prayer and praise agree;”

another opens a view of the tumult that was abroad. “Nothing since the days of the Revolution,” says the York Herald, “has ever presented to the world such a scene as this great county for fifteen days and nights. Repose or rest have been unknown in it, except as it was seen in a messenger asleep upon his post-horse, or in his carriage. Every day the roads in every direction to and from every remote corner of the county, have been covered with vehicles loaded with voters, barouches, curricles, gigs, flying wagons, and military cars with eight horses, crowded sometimes with forty voters, have been scouring the country, leaving not the slightest chance for the quiet traveler to urge his humble journey, or find a chair at an inn to sit down upon.”

During the closing days of the contest, Mr. Wilberforce was withdrawn from it by an attack of illness which confined him to his

room. The rumor that he was dead was now circulated, but, notwithstanding this, as well as other rumors, he was found in the ascendancy, and once more declared member for Yorkshire.

Seated in Parliament, business engrossed his attention. He complains of the "debates" as "poor compared with former times." He had himself entered so young upon the public service, that though still in life's prime, his earliest associates had passed away. He missed the great men of a former day. Burke and Pitt and Fox—all were gone. "There is no man now," he adds, "to take the lead like Pitt. Yet Percival improves, and Canning is extremely clever." Of the prime-minister he says, after alluding to his suavity and kindness, in contrast with the rough churlishness of another, "I believe him (Percival) to be a man of an undaunted spirit, but his modesty prevents him from taking that high tone, which at such a time

as this, rendered Pitt so equal to the emergency."

One thought of Christian love readily expands itself into another, and still another, and accordingly we find the advocate for the slaves of the Guinea Coast, and the millions of Asiatics, seeking sustenance for a handful of Moravian converts who dwelt among the ice-cliffs of Greenland, nor resting till he had procured "the dispatch of vessels on this errand of mercy." Now he is deeply interested in a "bill for the reduction of capital punishments," and now "off early to London to the war-office, about the boy Nowell, unlawfully recruited," and again to the colonial office about Marsden and a poor woman." Alive to every call of sorrow, the counselor and helper of the distressed, he won for himself the title of "Attorney General for the unprotected and friendless." Of his habits of perseverance, when he had undertaken an object of justice or benevolence, we find the testimony of one of the heads of the colonial

office, whom he had been compelled to weary with demands of this nature. Alluding to the general opinion that Mr. Wilberforce was possessed of a "gentle, yielding character," he intimates that the whole world is mistaken in its estimate, declaring that he has found him on the contrary to be "obstinate" to the very last degree. This secret of perseverance when pressed by obstacles may be found compressed into a line. Finding himself at the head of a minority in the House, on one of these questions affecting the public morals, he writes of the "parties—ours most respectable, theirs most numerous ; so much so that it is painful to persevere, but *we must please God and assert his cause.*"

The value attached by Mr. Wilberforce to the rest of the Sabbath, his care to preserve the day sacred from the intrusions of business, his grief when interruptions broke in upon his usual habits, can not fail to strike the most careless observer of his course.

By this he was helped to preserve an unruffled spirit amid scenes of intense and prolonged excitement. The fact that he was able every seventh day to disengage his mind from the turmoils of public life, he speaks of as a great antidote to its temptations. This influx of better thoughts at those seasons doubtless exerted a great influence upon other days. Continually we find in his diary tributes of thanksgiving for the Sabbath. The melancholy end of another eminent public man, his evident insanity and suicide, a few years after this time, were attributed to "wear and tear of mind." "It is very curious," writes Mr. Wilberforce, with reference to this, "to hear the newspapers speaking of incessant application to business, forgetting that by the weekly admission of a day of rest, which our Maker has graciously enjoined, our faculties would be preserved from this incessant strain."

The mention of this last circumstance has

carried us forward in our narrative, and we hasten to return.

The meeting of Parliament, in the winter of 1808, was put off from Monday to Thursday of the same week, the prime-minister willingly acceding to the suggestion of Mr. Wilberforce, that from the first arrangement a large amount of Sunday traveling must necessarily ensue. With a noble grace that deserved a better fate, Mr. Percival replied to the remonstrance, regretting that the circumstance had failed to attract his own attention.

On the third of May of the same year a most grateful sight was presented in the anniversary of the Bible Society. With exuberant joy does Mr. Wilberforce speak of the spectacle of "five or six hundred people of all sects and parties, with one heart, and face, and tongue."

But this was but a temporary calm amid a storm. The sweet charities of life must not

consume the days of a servant of the public, for commotions are still threatening the land. War is still abroad, and her tempest shakes the ark of the government. "The House of Commons has lost the public confidence," wrote Wilberforce. "The times are highly alarming. It would be worse to stifle inquiry than to prosecute it. Yet I see that the people may be inflamed to madness, or at least to the most mischievous excesses and measures. O may He who rides in the whirlwind direct the storm for our good."

The prospect of an American war appeared also in the distance. As this gradually grew nearer, Mr. Wilberforce assumed a decided opposition to whatever tended to such a result. In July, 1811, in the closing debate, he gave utterance to his feelings: "Deeply, sir, do I deplore the gloom which I see spreading over the western horizon, and I most earnestly trust that we are not to be involved in the misfortune of a new war, aggravated by possessing almost the character of a

civil strife—a war between two nations who are the children of the same family, and brothers in the same inheritance of common liberty.”

At a subsequent session (an inflammation of the lungs having deprived him of his usual power) he says: “I am wanting my voice much, that I may plead the cause of Christianity in India, and soften the asperity of hostile tempers between Great Britain and America. I am strongly disposed to go to the House, if Whitehead brings in this motion, that I may declare the grief and pain with which the very thought of a war with America fills my heart. I have often thought that we have not enough borne in mind that the people of America have great influence over their government, and that their thinking that a great number of people in this country feel for them, might tend to allay irritation, even if a war should break out.” Notwithstanding his inability to use his voice, he went on this occasion to the

House for the first time that session, and spoke for about twenty minutes.

An event occurred at this period which sent a shock through the kingdom—the death of the prime-minister, under circumstances of startling horror. “Stopped,” says Mr. Wilberforce, “to dine at Babington’s at half-past four. He came in greatly agitated, stating that Percival had been shot dead in the lobby. We could scarce believe it.”

The perpetrator of this most dreadful deed seems, as far as we are able to gather, to have been laboring under a singular hallucination. Supposing himself injured by the government, he determined on revenge. That the minister was the victim was without design.

The next Sunday Mr. Wilberforce wrote in his journal: “O, wonderful power of Christianity! Never can it have been seen, since our Saviour prayed for his murderers, in a more lovely form than in the conduct and

emotions it has produced in several on the occasion of poor dear Percival's death. Stephen, who had been at first so much overcome by the stroke, had been this morning, I found, praying for the wretched murderer ; and thinking that his being known to be a friend of Percival's might affect him, he went and devoted himself to trying to bring him to repentance. The poor creature was much affected, and very humble and thankful, but spoke of himself as unfortunate rather than guilty ; and said it was a necessary thing. Strange perversion—no malice against Percival.

“ Poor Mrs. Percival, after the first, grew very moderate and resigned, and with all her children knelt down by the body and prayed for them, and the murderer's forgiveness.”

To Mr. Hey he wrote : “ Alas ! into what times are we thrown ! I can not help thinking I see the source of that savage spirit that prevails so much.”

This he attributes to the decay of reverence

for authority and order, leaving, "where the fear of God has no place, the mind to the spirit of bad passions. I trust," he adds, "that we are introducing the true remedy, indeed, the only remedy of our diseased nature, by teaching the mass of our people the knowledge of the Scriptures. Surely it is an indication of the favor of the Almighty, that we have been enabled to spread so extensively the system of education." The commotions of the times, moreover, he proceeds to ascribe to the spread of "seditious publications." The letter continues—

"It is no small pleasure to me to believe that Mr. Percival had an habitual desire to please God ; and I doubt not he looked to him with unfeigned humiliation, through the Redeemer. It is really an honor to our House, that his private virtues were so generally recognized among us. Well, my dear sir, 'there remaineth a rest ;' and pray for me and mine, that we may enter into it after the short voyage of this tempestuous life."

XV.

Domestic Joys.

“I HAVE already discovered,” said Mr. Wilberforce, in a letter to a friend, “that children are very acute observers. Often when they seem to be playing about the room, heedless of all that is going forward, it appears afterward that they have heard, and remembered, too, the conversation.” Again, he writes to another friend: “I mean to make education my chief object. Pray for me, that I may be able to succeed. I can truly say I feel my own deficiencies.” “His efforts,” says one, “were aimed at opening the mind—creating a spirit of inquiry, and strengthening the powers.” Of accomplishments which might be exhibited, winning a direct return of praise, fostering

vanity, etc., he was comparatively jealous. With watchful eyes, observing the minutest tendencies of character, he endeavored to lead to the "highest principles of action."

If the calls of ordinary business may excuse a parent from an intimate association with his children, surely the responsibilities of public life may plead the same exemption. Sad, indeed, is it that, in either case, such should ever be claimed. For to know children intimately, to watch intelligently their springs of thought, may be, to the wisest of men, one of the best possible means of increasing in wisdom. All that is imparted to children returns with redoubled value to him who gives. But as the earliest life of the child is love, so love must be the medium through which he is approached.

On this ground now we meet the subject of this memoir. Not as the Christian legislator, the eloquent orator, the advocate for the rights of man ; but in his home, by the fireside, or beneath the spreading trees, or in

sweet garden-paths, or on the Sabbath-day, going to the house of God. Still with these little companions about him, gay as they are with childish mirth, roaming amid scenes of beauty, climbing the flowery slopes or resting on the green turf, or reciting hymns or favorite extracts of poetry as they are seated in the carriage on their way to church—for even in the busiest season the Sabbath, at least, is theirs. Absent every hour through the week, they long for the appearing of that father at its close, and duly are the flowers in the little garden-plots hoarded, that they may be gathered for a bouquet to greet him on the morning of that day of rest.

If to a tender and overflowing love be added a discriminating watchfulness, with power to persuade to do what is good, the idea of parental influence becomes perfected.

“He is always afraid of strangers,” said the nurse of his infant child, naturally enough, on one occasion. The expression sank deep into the heart of the father. A stranger!

was it right or wise or kind for one, by any calls of business, by any possible idea of usefulness, to be estranged from his children? No; to this he will never submit. Whatever may be the customs of the world, whatever the examples by which he may be surrounded, he, at least, will know his children—and he did. Their ringing shouts of merriment became music in his ear; and to promote their happiness and direct their minds in paths of wisdom and goodness became the choicest pleasure of his leisure hours. Pleasant, indeed, is it to follow those favored children in their daily walks, for now the recess of Parliament sends both parents and children into the country. These walks are made to be occasions for improvement. What books have these boys been reading? How much do they really know of their contents? Hardly will one of them risk the assertion that he has read a book, if he has only amused himself by running it over. No; for the beloved sharer of these daily rambles

has a way of talking about the book which makes it necessary that the boy should know something of it, too, in order to fill his part in the conversation. Then as to worthless books (lacking either mental or moral power), we can fancy they found little favor with this watchful parent.

Then the evening gathering, when Shakespeare and Southey were discussed, and the presiding genius of the scene lent his own silvery voice, giving added life to the tuneful pages of the "Lady of the Lake." Then, too, there were serene and more solemn hours of Sabbath eventide, when Cowper and the old Hebrew bards took the place of lighter lays.

Then there were those long excursions that took the whole day—"Cæsar's camp, and the cherry-orchard," the dinner eaten in the woods, all burdens thrown by ; yet even here, some favorite little volume finds its way, some cherished passage read aloud at a resting-place, and anon the voice of song is heard

waking its echoes among the dim aisles of the forest trees.

“There is no way,” remarked Mr. Wilberforce to a friend, “in which children’s tempers are more indicated than in such excursions.” Again : “It is of great importance to preserve boys’ affections, and prevent them from thinking home a dull place.”

To a little daughter he writes : “I am much pressed for time to-day ; but I must send an answer, though a short one, to my dear girl’s highly acceptable letter, for I do not consider as a reply the few lines which I added to my letter to mamma, two or three days ago. . While I am rambling about from place to place, my heart still keeps its station ; and, strange as it may seem, a certain little girl has such a firm hold on my affection, that wherever I am, she is continually presenting herself to my mind’s eye, and calling forth the most tender wishes for her happiness. The day, I trust, will come when

she will be able to travel about with me, not merely in idea, but in her own person. Meanwhile, we should be very thankful for having the means of hearing about those we love, when we are far removed from them. We are now almost two hundred miles asunder, yet I trust B. will be reading this the day after to-morrow, at about the same time of day at which I am now writing it. I trust that all my children, especially the elder ones, are more eminently careful when I am away to abstain from all that would give mamma pain, and to do whatever will give her pleasure, in order to make up to her for my absence. May God bless my dear children, and more particularly my dear little girl. How ardently do I long to see clear and indubitable proofs of your having received that divine grace which we must all possess before we can be admitted into the heavenly world. In you, and in my other children, I am always looking to discover any buddings of that fruit of the Spirit which

this blessed agent will produce where it really operates, just as a gardener looks over his fruit-trees from day to day to see whether the peaches and the nectarines are beginning to appear. I trust I do discern, now and then, a bud in my beloved child's heart. O ! cherish it, my dearest child, and try to prevent its becoming nipped or blasted, so as not to come to perfection.

“Once more, may God bless you.

“Ever your most affectionate.”

In the next there is a sweet elegance as well as tenderness. It is addressed to Mrs. Wilberforce, written from home, the mother and children being absent :—“I have been sitting under the trees reading and writing. The only part of the garden which I did not enjoy was one to which I went purposely, to see how all looked—the children's gardens. Even the fullest exuberance of summer beauties could not supply the want of animal life. Barbara's gum-cistus is in high beauty,

and the roses in full bloom. My own room produces something of the same melancholy as the children's gardens."

This time, however, he consoles himself that he is "going to dine at Babington's, to meet Robert Hall," whose genius and piety he well knew how to value. Alluding to the "shyness" of that celebrated man, he says, "he could not bring himself to come to me, though hearing that he wished to see me, I wrote him a long letter to banish all such feelings, and settle about our meeting."

Writing at one time of an absent son: "Mr. R.'s last letter suggests some very painful fears that ——'s temper has been again ungoverned. Dear, dear boy! Though writing at the committee-table, with people all around me, I can scarce refrain from tears while I thus write about him. O that he would pray earnestly! How sure I am that he would then be blessed with grace, and be enabled to make our hearts leap for joy.

Farewell—a thousand times God bless you all.”

Again, in a pleasanter vein, to another son :

“HOUSE OF COMMONS.

“I take advantage of a dull speech to come up stairs and chat a little with my dear ——, though I heartily regret that I alone can be the speaker, for I should gladly hear my dear boy’s voice, and see his countenance. Yesterday was the first time of my going to Kensington Gore. I had no comfort there, but many qualms of emptiness, when you were all away, and only vacant places to remind me of you. I hope Mr. L. told you that I had tried to get your watch mended in time to go down to you by him, but in vain. A broken limb is not so easily repaired, especially when it is required that the party shall *go* as he did before. I am sorry to hear that the substitute you have is liable to occasional headaches. I hope you will bear this in mind, in your treatment of it, and not

let it be stunned or stupefied through carelessness."

Again, to illustrate how little the collisions of political life, the fierceness of debate, the continued "strife of tongues," had with him power to harden the heart, or even to dim the spiritual life, we have the following touching incident, from the private memoranda of a friend, who was at that time a frequent inmate of his family. At the close of a busy day, perhaps after the stormy contests of the House of Commons, "between twelve and one o'clock he heard that his daughter, who was ill, could get no sleep. Coming into her room he took her hand, and kneeling down by the bed, spoke of the tender shepherd carrying the weak and lame in his bosom to warm and cherish them. Then he applied this to our blessed Saviour; spoke of his tenderness and love; how he would feel for his dear suffering child, and conduct her all the way she had to go, until he took her from this scene of trial and sorrow to a world

where sighing and sorrow shall flee away—a beautiful personification, indicating their haste to leave the mansions of the blessed! In this spirit he prayed with her, and never left the bed until her spirit was visibly soothed and supported.”

Again, to a son aged thirteen :

“MY DEAREST :—

“Though it is quite contrary to my ordinary practice to write letters on a Sunday, yet having been unable to prepare a few lines for you yesterday, I feel myself warranted, by our blessed Saviour’s principles and examples, even, in the case of the Jewish Sabbath, to take up my pen to-day, to meet my dearest boy on his birthday with the assurance of his father’s tenderest concern for his temporal and still more for his eternal happiness. On this day, especially, my prayers are poured forth, that the gracious Father of the spirits of all flesh, who has promised that he will hear the prayers of them that call upon him,

may hear my supplications on your behalf, that as you have already enjoyed, and still enjoy many advantages, which few others possess, you may not at length render them the cause only of your greater condemnation.

“It makes me tremble, however, sometimes to reflect on the peculiar degree of your responsibility. Yet why should I despond? I know that God will be faithful to his promises; that he will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it with sincerity and earnestness. And will not my dear boy thus ask? While Christ is thus thinking of you, will not you think of him? Between seven and eight, especially, I shall imagine you in your own little room; and also between twelve and one in the day. I shall retire myself into my own room and pray earnestly for you. Remember, my dear boy, that we do not naturally love God and Christ, and desire above all things to please them as we ought; but we must have this love and

desire before we can be admitted into Heaven. My heart is very full. May God bless you, my dearest boy."

At another time, he writes :

"I have neither time nor eyesight to-day sufficient to send you what, from its size, may deserve the name of a letter : but a letterling it may be called ; and you know the old passage—*Inest sua gratia parvis*—a maxim which, from my not being of extravagantly large dimensions, I may be supposed to consider a very reasonable proposition. I am glad to find (and it is quite a drop of balm in my heart when I hear of my dear boy's going on well) that you are setting to work doggedly, as Dr. Johnson used to term it ; but I like neither the word nor the idea. I hope my dear boy will act from a higher principle than one which I have seen in a poor animal in a team, when the *taste* of the wagoner's whip has made him resolutely set all his mus-

cular force in action and pull up a steep as if determined to master it. But my dearest — will be prompted by a nobler set of motives—by a desire of pleasing God and showing gratitude to his Saviour, and not grieving the Holy Spirit; of giving pleasure to a father and mother, who are watching over his progress with tender solicitude.”

For two sons away at school, papers were prepared, with directions varying so as to be suited to the ages and character of each. We give entire the one addressed to the younger :

“Hints for my dear —, to be often read over with self-examination :

“1. Endeavor to bear in mind that you will be often tempted to behave to your brother not so well as you ought. That you may be on your guard against such temptations,

“2. Recollect, if you can, what are the occasions which have most commonly led you

to behave ill to your brother, and try to keep them in your memory by now and then thinking them over ; and when such occasions are about to occur, whether at play, in reading, or wherever else, then be doubly on your guard, and try to lift up your heart in an ejaculation to God that you may be enabled to resist the temptation ; and if you do resist it, lift up your heart again in thanksgiving.

“ 3. Remember one season of temptation will always be when you are at play, especially where there are sides, whether you are on the same side as — or not.

“ 4. Remember it is not sufficient not to be unkind to your brother ; you must be positively kind to all, and how much more, then, to a brother !

“ 5. Remember you will be under a temptation to resist unkindly —’s disposition to command you. If Christ tells us not to resent little outrages from any one (see Matt. v. 39-44), how much less should you resent

his commanding you ! Though perhaps not quite right in itself, yet an elder brother has a right to some influence from being such.

“6. Often reflect that you are both children of the same father and mother ; how you have knelt together in prayer ; have prayed together as children, and have sat round the same table, on a Sunday, in peace and love. Place the scene before your mind’s eye, and recollect how happy mamma and I have been to see you all around us good and happy.

“7. You are not so lively by nature as he is, but be willing always to oblige him by playing at proper times, etc., though not disposed, of yourself. Nothing more occurs to me, except—and this both mamma and I desire to press strongly upon you—to be on your guard against being out of humor on a little raillery, and always to laugh at it ; nothing shows good-humor more than taking a joke without being fretful or gloomy.

“May God bless my dearest boy, and enable him to profit from the above suggestions of his most affectionate father,

“W. WILBERFORCE.”

The older brother is cautioned in like manner, according to his peculiar temptations :—

“I will specify the times and circumstances in which you ought to be on your guard against behaving improperly : When you have done your own business, or are not inclined to do it, beware of interrupting him in doing his. When you are with older companions than yourself, beware of treating him less kindly, or with any thing like arrogance. When you are in the highest spirits, having been at play, or from any other cause, you are apt to lose your self-government, and to be out of humor on having your inclination crossed in any way ; beware, in such circumstances, of being unkind to him.”

When absent at school, every possible influence must be brought to bear for their

good. To Mrs. Wilberforce he writes: "I beg you will write occasionally to —— and ——; their sisters also should write to them pretty frequently. I assure you, both from my own experience and from that of others, that at their period of life the frequent recurrence of home associations, and of sisterly affection, has a peculiarly happy effect on the character and manners. Can you send —— your newspaper after reading it; he has repeatedly asked to have one, and I don't like to send him an opposition paper."

To a daughter he writes: "I trust that I need not assure you that the letter I received from you a few days ago gladdened my heart, and that not with a transient joy, but with solid and permanent satisfaction. It is now your business, my dear child, to endeavor to strengthen the foundation of all Christian graces by learning more habitually to walk by faith, and not by sight. Accustom yourself to be spiritually-minded, which, as the Apostle truly says, is life and peace. Fre-

quent self-examination is one of the means which you will find eminently useful for this end. You would do well to practice it in the middle of the day, as well as in the morning and evening. A very few moments will suffice for a general retrospect of the past morning. I have often kept written on a small slip of paper a note of my chief besetting sins, against which it was especially necessary that I should be habitually watching and guarding, or of the chief Christian graces which I wished to cultivate, or of the grand truths which I desired to bear in remembrance ; and I used to look over this paper at my season for prayer or of self-examination. My chief duties and relations (such as father, brother, friend, acquaintance, master) were down on this paper, and were thus kept in constant view. But in using this or any other expedient, you will, I am sure, remember ever to be looking up for that grace which can alone enable us to will or to do what is well-pleasing to God.

“While I rejoice that my dear —— is employed so rationally, so usefully, in a manner also so pleasing to God, and so happily for herself, I cannot but look forward to the time of our again meeting and living a little quietly in the country, if it may please God, with some earnestness of desire. But it is right that we should abstain from all ærial castle-building, and remember that not only the time is short, but even uncertain. We know not what a day may bring forth. Let us therefore be doing on the day the duties of the day, and then leave the future with that gracious Being who has declared himself faithful to his promises.”

During an excursion in the summer of 1818, visiting Rydal and Grasmere, he delighted to point out to his children the beauties of the scenery, retracing the spots he had loved in his earlier days.* “Why should

* During the journeyings of this summer, the two sons of Mr. Wilberforce, rambling in the vicinity of the residence

you not buy a house here," asked one of the children, "and then we could come here every year?" "I should enjoy it," was his answer, "as much as any one; but we must remember that we are not sent into the world merely to enjoy prospects and scenery. We have nobler objects of pursuit. We are commanded to imitate Him who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It doubles my own enjoyment to see my dear children enjoy these scenes with me; and now and then we need rest from severe labors, and it may be permitted us to luxuriate in such lovely spots, but it is fit for us to return to duty." Yet increasing years had by no means damped the ardor of his enjoyment of such scenes. He writes to Mr. Stephen: "I quite long to have you with me."—"Busy

of Mr. Southey, were desirous of visiting him. But they were forbidden to do so by their father. The great poet was at that time mourning the loss of a beloved and only son. They must not call on him, "lest seeing lads of your age should too painfully remind him of the son he has lost."

till one. Then on Windermere. Dined in the boat, under the lee of the great island. Home late, a delightful evening. Walked out at night and saw the moon and a flood of light from Wordsworth's terrace." The youngest of the party could hardly have delighted in these days more than himself, while continually he spoke to them golden words of wisdom, and shed around the sunshine of his own temper, mellowed by time, but still joyous.

But where is there on earth a circle so lovely or so blessed that sorrow may not enter? where the Spoiler ever turns back from his purpose, or lingers hesitatingly whether he shall throw his dart? Two years after this a heavy grief fell on them all, casting a solemn shadow over the glory of the summer days.

The eldest daughter continued to decay in health and strength. As the autumn waned she passed away, breathing her last at the

close of the year, at the house of Mr. Stephen, where she had been carried for medical attendance.

“I have been employed,” wrote the afflicted father to a friend, “for a long period in attending the sick, and at length the dying bed of a justly-beloved grown-up daughter. But the pain of our late trial has been abundantly mitigated by the assured persuasions that she is gone to a better world. It would have been delightful, even to those who were not so personally interested in the scene as ourselves, to have witnessed the composure with which, in the prospect of speedy dissolution, our dear child, naturally of a very timid spirit, was able to pray that her parents might be supported under the privation they were about to suffer. I shall never forget the tenderness, faith, and love, and devotion with which, having desired all others to withdraw, she poured forth her last audible prayer for herself and us. Sustained by an humble hope of the mercies of God

through her Redeemer and Intercessor, she was enabled to bear her sufferings with patience and resignation, and to preserve a composure which surprised even herself. On the very morning of the last day of her life, she had desired a favorite female attendant to ask her physician, whether or not there was any hope of her recovery, 'but if not,' she added, 'all is well.' She expired at last like a person falling asleep—scarcely a groan, and not the least struggle."

To Mr. Babington he opens, with still more of freedom, the feelings called up by this event: "There was none of that exultation and holy joy which are sometimes manifested by dying Christians. But I know not that my judgment does not rest with more solid confidence on her humble composure and consciousness of her own unworthiness, with an affectionate casting of herself on her Redeemer and Intercessor. The day before she expired, she sent all out but her mother and me, and concluded some declarations of her

humble hope in the mercies of God through Christ, with a beautiful prayer addressed to her Saviour. And she had remarked to her mother that she had never before understood the meaning and value of Christ's intercession. My dear friend, I must stop—you are a father." And with this family scene, mournful, yet reflecting heavenly radiance, we close these details.

XVI.

Christianization of India.

IN the autumn of 1812, a dissolution of Parliament being expected, Mr. Wilberforce was again called upon to consider the question of continuing to represent the county of Yorkshire. There was not now, as there had been five years before, an opposition. Other causes prompted his decision. Some of his most strongly attached friends, observant of the effect of labors so arduous and long-continued upon a delicate frame of body, were desirous of his release. He himself says: "The urgent claims of my children upon my thoughts, time, and superintendence, strongly enforce my relinquishment. O Lord, give me wisdom to guide me rightly. I mean to spend a day in religious exercises, and to

make this with my children the great objects with God."

It was not, however, a complete retirement that was anticipated. The influence of a near friend, Lord Calthorp, had secured for Mr. Wilberforce a seat in the House, where his constant attendance would be less necessary, and his weight of labor removed. He was returned for the borough of Bramber.

His resignation was speedily known, and produced various feelings. The Yorkshire men felt as a loss the retirement of their distinguished and "efficient member." "The county at large, on the day of nomination, recorded solemnly their judgment of his character in an enthusiastic vote of their unanimous thanks." His native town of Hull did the same. His nearest friends, however, rejoiced in his release.

In the following, he reviews his long and singular connection with the county:—

"Surely if I can not but look back upon the circumstances which attended the first

formation of my connection with the county of York, without recognizing the traces of providential guidance, neither can I forbear to acknowledge the same gracious favor, in my having so long continued in my honorable station. May I not well wonder that in a county accustomed to so much attention from its members, so much that was likely to give offense should be endured in me, without the slightest expression of disapprobation. My religious character and habits might alone be expected to produce disgust. My never attending the county races or even the assizes ; my never cultivating the personal acquaintance of the nobility and gentry, (an omission which would have been culpable, but for the expenditure it would have occasioned of time, which I wanted for important purposes,) my seldom visiting the county, sometimes not going into it for several years together, all these might fairly have been expected to have alienated from me the good will of the freeholders ; yet it never produced this effect,

and I have every reason to believe that I never should have experienced another opposition."

Upon his return to London, he set apart a day for especial private devotions. "I have had serious doubts whether or not it is right to do so, when I have so many important subjects to consider and so much to do, yet the examples as well as the writings of good men, and above all the Holy Scriptures (taking the precepts which directly treat of fasting, and comparing them with others) warrant it. N. B. Christ's words about the demons, which were expelled only by fasting and prayer. Then as to my being now extremely occupied. Owen's remark in some degree applies (inference from Malachi) that we should give God if needful our best time. O Lord, thy blessing can render far more than a day's time as nothing in my worldly business, and if the main-spring's force be strengthened, and its working improved,

(cleansed from dust and foulness,) surely the machine will go better.

“Let me look over my ‘grounds for humiliation,’ my ‘company regulations.’ How sadly apt am I to lose all recollection of these, and of keeping my heart when I am in society! Lord, strengthen me with might. Let Christ dwell, not merely occasionally visit, but dwell in my heart by faith. Let me cultivate more an habitual love to God.”

Questions of such importance were now engaging the attention of the House of Commons, that as yet he found little relief from the resignation of his former seat. The subject of Catholic emancipation was agitating the public mind, and on expressing himself in favor of that measure, he grieves much that in this he differs from his religious friends.

In 1813 the great question with regard to the introduction of Christianity into the East Indies, discussed and thrown out in 1793, was again brought forward. To advocate the

claims of conquered India to the gospel was now the great work to which Mr. Wilberforce applied himself. He endeavored to arouse the religious sensibilities of the National Church to this great and most appropriate work. This was urged in the columns of the *Christian Observer*, where the clergymen of the Establishment were especially called upon to give their influence to this work. Since the carrying of the abolition bill, no more absorbing or exciting subject had gained his attention. These efforts were now tending to a crisis. "Surely," he wrote to a friend, "there can be no doubt that all who are zealous in the cause of Christ, will do their utmost to enlighten our East India fellow-subjects."

Hitherto the control of the British possessions in this matter, as in others, had been in the hands of the directors of the East India Company, and to improve the character of the natives, by causing them to be instructed in the Christian religion, had by no

means been regarded as a duty. It was even asserted that the attempt to Christianize the Hindoos would be fatal to the British rule in the vast empire of the East. To a scanty provision for the English residents, the Company might consent, but to one that should embrace, or by its influence encourage missionary efforts, never. The directors, making known unequivocally their line of conduct, the question at issue became a simple one. Shall this power be accorded them for the next twenty years as for the last? How this might turn was most uncertain, for while the Anglo-Indians contended stoutly that a change would be most unsafe, so untried was the measure advocated by the religious party, that to prove its safety and desirableness was difficult.

To many of his country correspondents Mr. Wilberforce sent letters, urging that petitions might be presented. "We have," he says, "exclaimed loudly against the proposed system of barring out all moral and religious

light from the East Indies, and declared that we were confident the friends of religion, morality and humanity, throughout the kingdom, would petition on the subject. Now you, I trust, will make good our words. You petitioned in the case of the slave-trade, and those petitions were eminently useful, so they would be now."

Again he writes: "On the thirteenth, early in the city, at the general meeting of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. Made the report of our deputation, and agreed to a petition to both Houses for introducing Christianity into India."

At this time, from his peculiar position and the confidence inspired by his religious character and accessible way of life, he became as a bond of union among Christians of different views, in communication at once with bishops of the national Church and dissenters of various names. The religious sense of the people was aroused. Petitions began to pour in from all quarters. The Methodists, as a

body, were zealous in the work. The London Missionary Society, the principle of the formation of which sought to unite in one the efforts of all Christians, was in vigorous exercise. The Baptists, having so early solved for themselves the practicability of missions in the East Indies, could not be backward in lending their support in every possible way. Carey and his associates had now been nearly twenty years on the ground. Their labors and their successes witnessed in favor of this great cause. They had won, too, the favor of the Governor-General of India. But respect for the learning and character of an individual missionary, however valuable in the infancy of Christian efforts, in India was no pledge for their extension.

Laid aside temporarily by illness, Mr. Wilberforce writes : " How does this little check of sickness impress upon me the duty of working while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work ! Let me not take an estimate of myself from others, who do not

know me, but from my own self-knowledge and conscience. O, Lord, let my faith and love be more active, bringing forth more of the fruits of the Spirit."

Thus he resumed his work. In the great contest of the abolition of the slave-trade he had powerful helpers. Men of giant mental stature and vast political power labored by his side. Now the case was otherwise. His only resource, comparatively, is in the religious conscience of the people. This must be brought skillfully to bear upon the work in hand. The appeal had not been made in vain, and the heads of government entered into an arrangement, he says, far "surpassing my expectations." On the following Sunday he writes: "Let me express my humiliation and my gratitude to God for enabling us to agree with government as to the conditions of sending out missionaries, and in general as to improving, moralizing and Christianizing India. I humbly hope God has great designs

in view for the East, and that they will be executed by Great Britain."

But the conflict was not yet over. These arrangements of government, Parliament might reject, and moreover "in the House of Commons lay the strength of the Anglo-Indian party." On the twenty-second of June, says the biographer of Wilberforce, "he was at his post, with his mind full of his subject. Never did he speak with greater power, or produce more impression. Twenty years before, he had appeared in the same place the eloquent advocate of this same cause. He had, beyond all expectation, been spared to lead the onset in a new engagement." "He who knows my heart," he said, in closing his account of the Hindoo superstitions, "knows that I have not drawn this melancholy picture to exult over its blackness. It is with grief and shame I own it, mourning, sir, over my own country, which, for fifty years and more, has left so many millions of our fellow-creatures in this state

of misery and vice. I am not bringing a bill of indictment against the Indian race ; but I have lived long enough to learn ‘that flatterers are not friends.’ I am willing to allow their present degradation, that I may raise them to a higher level.

“We carried it,” he adds, “about eighty-nine to thirty-six—beyond all hope. I heard afterward that many good men had been praying for us all night. O ! what cause for thankfulness, yet almost intoxicated with success.”

The petitions that “loaded the table,” to the number of nine hundred, could not but produce an impression.

Full justice was done in this noble and most effective burst of eloquence to the missionaries earliest in the field. They had been called “Anabaptists and fanatics,” and railery had exhausted itself in endeavoring to cast ridicule upon the cobbler of Nottinghamshire. The vindication of Wilberforce was complete, and clothed upon with the living

graces of his own genius. "I do not know," he said, "a finer instance of the moral sublimity than that a poor cobbler, working in his stall, should conceive the idea of converting the Hindoos to Christianity. Yet such was Dr. Carey. Milton's planning his *Paradise Lost* in his old age and blindness was nothing to it."

There were those before him, the orator of the day well knew, who had no eyes for the sublimity of this view; and for them he had reserved another argument. Coldly they listened to the tale of the Christ-like love that dwelt in the heart of the poor man—what shall move them? The fact is uttered that when arrived in India and appointed by Lord Wellesly to an honorable station, with a salary of more than a thousand pounds, Dr. Carey made this all over to the general objects of the mission. They are electrified!

"It seemed the only thing that moved them," said the indignant pleader for India.

Among those who aided in furnishing facts

concerning the Serampore Mission, before all others, was the Rev. Andrew Fuller.

It may not be known to the admirers of this remarkable man and devoted Christian minister, that on the occasion of this debate he but narrowly escaped *a challenge to fight*. Dr. Carey had been ferociously attacked by a member of the House of Commons. Mr. Fuller had interposed in writing. With a manner which could not be mistaken, the notorious duelist inquired, "Pray, Mr. Wilberforce, do you know a Mr. Andrew Fuller, who has written to me to retract the statement which I made with reference to Dr. Carey?" "Yes, I know him perfectly," replied Wilberforce, to whose quick sense of the ludicrous the wasted wrath of the other could not fail to appeal; adding, with a smile, "You can do nothing with him in your way: he is a respectable Baptist minister at Kettering."

"In due time," he adds, "there came from India an authoritative contradiction of the slander. For two whole years did I take it

in my pocket to the House of Commons to read it to the House when the author of the accusation should be present."

This opportunity it seems never occurred, for the intended antagonist of Mr. Fuller absented himself from the occasion and the place.

When we recall the difficulties of the first missionaries to India, the uncertain tenure by which they held the right to preach the Gospel to the natives, or even to remain in the country, we can not but attach a high value to the labors here recorded. The changed action of the East India government need not be dwelt upon in this work. But even the American missionary of the present day, as he hails the protection of the British flag, and walks in peace beneath its shadow, may look back gratefully to the struggle of that early period to open the way for the entrance of the Gospel to the vast realms of the East.

XVII.

Great Changes.

SINCE the triumphant passage of the Abolition Bill, in 1807, which made the slave-trade a crime in the eye of British law, Mr. Wilberforce had turned his attention to the Continental powers of Europe. To induce them, in this matter, to coöperate with England, and thus render abolition universal, was the object of his efforts. While the subject was yet in agitation, before the actual passage of the bill, when success appeared to be in view, the subject of a negotiation with foreign powers was brought forward. An address to the king, praying him to invite the coöperation of the sovereigns of Europe, was voted by the House of Commons.

Mr. Wilberforce, in a letter addressed to

the Emperor of Russia, forcibly presented this subject.

In the memorable year 1814, when Bonaparte abdicated his dominions, and peace was restored to Europe, it was matter of much disappointment to the friends of the slave, that in the treaty of peace, universal abolition had not been secured. In the loud congratulations that greeted Lord Castlereagh on his entrance into the House of Commons, bearing in his hand a copy of the treaty just concluded at Paris, Mr. Wilberforce was silent. Seizing the first favorable moment—"I can assure my noble friend," he exclaimed, "that if I have not been able to concur in the salutations with which he has been welcomed on his return, it is not from any want of personal cordiality." After calling the attention of the House to the slave trade among the French and Dutch people, he continued: "When I consider the miseries that we are now about to renew, is

it possible to regard them without the deepest emotions of sorrow? My noble friend must allow for my extreme regret, if, when at length, after a contest of so many years, I had seemed to myself in possession of the great object of my life—if then, when the cup is at my lips, it is rudely dashed from them, for a term of years at least, if not forever.”

The number of distinguished foreigners, who during this year visited London, was remarkable. Among these was the Emperor of Russia. Mr. Wilberforce was informed that an interview was desired, and shortly afterward received a summons to that effect. He writes in his Journal: “Got up by half past six, that I might pray for a blessing upon the interview.” He had previously heard that Alexander had charged himself with abolition in a Congress of Nations. This interview was followed by others. “What could be done,” said the Emperor, with regard to the treaty of peace, “when your own ambassador gave way?”

Of the results of the favor expressed by the Emperor, hopes were entertained by Mr. Wilberforce and others in behalf of the great cause. Having already, through Cardinal Gonsalvi, attempted to influence the councils of Rome, he next addressed letters to the literati of Europe. Humboldt, Sismondi, Chateaubriand, and Madame de Stäel were addressed. With the last named of these celebrated persons he had become acquainted some time before in London. His chief effort was, however, a printed letter to Talleyrand, which was to contain the whole matter in a small compass, and was regarded as a manifesto of the sentiments of the friends of universal abolition. The sage of the French court replied, at first, with elegant and courteous sentiments expressed at large; afterward, in a brief letter with more decided favor. Much was hoped by the friends of the cause from these widely-spread influences. "I almost anticipate," wrote one, "more good from these new efforts of our friends,

than even from the abolition voted here ; and the name of Wilberforce has attained new celebrity, and his character and general opinions a degree of weight, which perhaps no private individual, not invested with office, ever possessed. My delight has consisted much in observing his Christian simplicity, and the general uniformity in his character and conduct, amid the multitude of compliments from the great, made on the part of some with much feeling. He is, indeed, in his usual bustle, but he reminds me, nevertheless, of that saying which was applied to Fox, that the greatest objects or the most heavy load of business, never seemed to put him into that petty tumult which is the common mark of inferior men."

Notwithstanding this state of encouraged hope, the work proceeded slowly. A letter written to Mr. Wilberforce by Mr. Brougham at this time, touches upon the matter.

"You may easily believe," he says, "that I have thought of nothing but the treaty for

two days past, and have each moment found out new cause for vexation and indignation. A fine return truly, and a pure sense of the benefits they have received, those base Bourbons are evincing !

“As for Alexander and the other allies, they may cheaply enough be abolitionists, having not one negro—as I doubt not the Bourbons are all for abolishing villenage. This liberality at other people's expense is, I believe, the whole amount of the magnanimity we hear so much of. However, we must try such means rather than despair ; and we ought to think betimes how to set about it. But in truth one is disheartened and sick of men, and above all of rulers.”

These vexing negotiations were closed in a manner little expected. What the restored Bourbon had failed to accomplish, was done by another and stronger hand. From the retirement of Elba, an eagle eye watched the movements of the sovereigns, and the po-

sition of England, on this question. Bonaparte, upon his escape and brief restoration to power, among other acts of a popular kind, decreed the abolition of slavery in the French dominions. Nor when he fell was this allowed to be repealed.

Great as had been the work accomplished by the British Parliament, the friends of the African could not conceal from themselves, that all that had been expected was not yet attained. Particularly was this true with regard to the condition of those already in bondage. The improvement that would ensue from cutting off the supplies, had not appeared. Those supplies, in fact, continued. The slave ship, despite the law, still cast its shadow in the Indian seas. To meet the demands of the occasion, the "Bill for the Registry of Negroes" was, by Mr. Wilberforce, brought into Parliament. This movement was the first restraint laid upon the exercise of irresponsible power in the hands of the West Indian master. Mild as it appeared, it

was the first of a series of efforts which finally resulted in emancipation. The friends of this measure had taken a larger stride in the work before them than they were themselves fully aware. A storm of opposition was aroused. Perhaps never in his whole life before had Mr. Wilberforce been the object of such a tumult of calumny. These attacks upon his character were both violent and long continued. That he could never be aroused to bitterness of feeling, is to be attributed to no lack of aggravated ill-will on the part of his enemies. It is to be sought elsewhere. At times he expressed his fears lest they "occupy the public mind, and so prejudice the great cause." On one occasion he regrets that he had not answered an accuser in print. With a touch of pleasantry, at another time, he told the House of Commons, "that if these things were true, he ought to have been hanged thirty years ago." Again he says, "I get more and more to disrelish these brawlings, and to be less touchy as to my character.

This I fear is chiefly from advancing years and quiescence ; something from the decay of natural spirits, and some little I hope from the growing indifference to human estimation, and from an increased value for peace and love. But it is a clear duty to prevent our good from being evil spoken of, when we can do this by a fair and calm defense."

It was, however, a striking testimony to the purity of his life, and the high principles by which he was habitually governed, that, on one occasion was awarded him. When the sarcasm of an opponent was uttered on "the honorable and the religious member," the feeling expressed was as though something sacred had been invaded. Cries of "ORDER" resounded from every part of the House. For thirty years had his endeavor been to act, in his position, upon Christian principles, and this sudden and impulsive tribute showed the degree of estimation in which he was held.

The year 1815 was marked by the death

of Henry Thornton. Of him Mr. Wilberforce remarked, "he was one of my oldest, kindest, most intimate, and valuable friends. To me, who used to consult him on all public questions, and who profited so often from the extraordinary superiority of his understanding, the loss is almost irreparable. But it is the will of the Almighty, and it becomes us to submit. It is the ordination of infinite wisdom and goodness, and it becomes us to say, 'Thy will be done.' "

A week only had passed, when he records, in a letter to Hannah More, the death of another—one of her friends as well as his—whom he speaks of as only less dear (than Thornton) ; as of more recent acquisition ; one from whom, from the developments of genius and piety which he had made, much was expected—John Bowdler.

It was now a time of great discontent and "sad rioting" among the people. Excitement was high, for the question of the Corn Laws was before the House. Mr. Wilber-

force, in making up his mind to speak on the subject, remarks in his Journal, "I see people wonder I do not speak one way or the other. It will be said, he professes to trust in God's protection, but he would not venture any thing. Then I shall have religious questions and moral questions, to which my speaking will conciliate, and, *contra*, my silence strongly indispose men. Besides, it is only fair to the government, when I really think them right to say so, as an independent man, not liable to the imputation of party bias, corrupt agreement with landed interest, &c.; so I prepared this morning, and spoke, and though I lost my notes, and forgot much I meant to say, I gave satisfaction."

A person formerly in his employ was hooted after, the next morning, in Covent Garden market. "So your old master has spoken on the Corn Bill! *His house shall pay for it!*" Mrs. Wilberforce having been advised to remove from the premises, four or five sol-

diers were placed there, that their presence might prevent the approach of violence.

Some weeks after this, he joined his family at the village of Taplow, and spent a Sabbath. It was now the 18th of June, and the country in the full bloom of summer. The quiet beauty of the scene filled his heart with joy. "He seemed to shake off with delight the dust and bustle of the crowded city, and as he walked up the rising street of the village, on his way to the old church of Taplow, he called on all around him to rejoice in the visible goodness of his God ; and 'perhaps,' he said to his children, 'at this very moment, when we are walking thus in peace to the house of God, our brave fellows may be fighting hard in Belgium.'"

On that very Sunday was fought the battle of Waterloo ! This he learned on his return to London.

Mr. Wilberforce had experienced this year sad bereavements, in the removal of dear

friends ; but a nearer affliction awaited him—the death of his only sister, Mrs. Stephen.

To the intimate and peculiar sympathy between these two, we have referred in the earlier pages of this volume. He alludes often to the tenderness of her affection for him. This was blended with the deepest admiration of his character and public labors. Her own religious life had been quickened by the influence of his piety, and fostered, in its earlier stages, by his loving care. At times a peculiar tenderness and scrupulousness of spirit, joined to delicate health, had made her an object of solicitude, and we find him, in the earlier periods of his life, devoting to her his time and attentions. Her death was an unexpected blow. He had left her only a few weeks before, and rejoiced “to see her better than she had been for a long time past.” With a heavy heart he set off for the residence of his brother-in-law.

“On arriving, I learned that my sister had died yesterday at four o’clock. Poor Stephen

much affected ! Liable to strong paroxysms, at other times calm and pretty cheerful. I prayed by my dear sister's body, and with the face uncovered. Its fixedness very awful. I sat all the evening engaging Stephen, while the coffin was adjusting below. How affecting all these things ! how little does the immortal spirit regard it ! Looking at night, till near two o'clock this morning, over my dear sister's letters—many to and from myself, when she and I were first earnest in religion."

" Our separation from each other just at this time," he writes to a friend, " if it produces some pain, yet reminds us of the call we have for gratitude to the Father of mercies, who has so long spared us to each other. How can I but feel this, when our dear friend's solitary situation is so forcibly impressed on me ! I, indeed, have lost a most affectionate sister ; one, of whom I can truly say, that I believe there never was on earth a more truly attached, generous, and faithful friend to a brother, who, though I hope not

insensible to her value, saw but little of her to maintain her affection, and of whom, alas ! I could say much that might reasonably have abated the force and cooled the warmth of her affections."

"How affecting is it to leave the person we have known all our lives, on whom we should have been afraid to let the wind blow too roughly, to leave her in the cold ground alone ! This quite strikes my imagination on such occasions. But there is another thing that has impressed itself in the present instance much more powerfully than in any other I ever remember. I mean, in contemplating the face of our dead friend, to observe the fixed immoveableness of the features. Perhaps it struck me more in my sister's case, because her countenance owed more of the effect it produced to the play of features than to their formation. I could not get rid of the effect produced on me, by the stiff and cold fixedness, for a long time. But O ! it is the spirit, the inhabitant of the earthly tene-

ment, not the tenement itself, which was the real object of our affection. How unspeakably valuable are the Christian doctrines and hopes in such circumstances as ours ! We should not care much, if we believed that the object of our tender regard had gone a few days before us a journey we ourselves should travel ; especially if we knew that the journey's end was to be a lasting abode of perfect happiness. Now, blessed be God, this is after all not an illustration. It is the reality. The only drawback with me here, is that I have much to do for God, and the self-reproach for not having done it."

We must suppose here that what he had actually been permitted to do, in serving his generation, looked little by reason of the contrasted largeness of desire which filled his heart. It certainly was not by comparing his own services with those of others that this sense of deficiency was awakened ; for where could he find one whose works of usefulness so abounded as his own ?

In general, however, at this period of his life he gives vent to his emotions in words of thankful praise. He seems to have entered upon that phase of the Christian life which is marked by a holy, all-predominating love. Here was the secret of the harmlessness of those shafts of calumny that fell so thickly around his way. "All natural objects round him," says his biographer, "had become the symbols of the presence and love of his heavenly Father."

"I was walking with him in his verandah," says a friend, "the year before, watching for the opening of a night-blowing cereus. As we stood in eager expectation, it suddenly burst wide open before us. 'It reminds me,' said he, as we admired its beauty, 'of the dispensations of the divine Providence first breaking on the glorified eye, when they shall fully unfold to the view, and appear as beautiful as they are complete.'"

"For myself," he says, when to his own family he unveiled his heart,—"I can truly

say that scarcely any thing has at times given me more pleasure than the consciousness of living, as it were, in an atmosphere of love ; and heaven has itself appeared delightful in that very character of being a place in which not only every one would love his brethren, but in which every one would be assured that his brother loved *him* ; and thus that all was mutual kindness and harmony, without one discordant jarring : all sweetness, without the slightest acescency."

The following paragraph, which we quote from the pen of his biographer, beautifully illustrates his habits and character at this time. Referring to the extract just made, he says : "There was no obtrusive display of these affections. True Christian joy is for the most part a secret as well as a serene thing. The full depth of his feelings was hidden even from his own family. 'I am never affected to tears,' he says, more than once, 'except when I am alone.' A stranger might have noticed little else than that he was more uniformly

cheerful than most men of his time of life. Closer observation showed a vein of Christian feeling mingling with and purifying the natural flow of a most happy temper ; while those who lived most continually with him could trace distinctly in his tempered sorrows, and sustained and almost child-like gladness of heart, the continual presence of that ‘peace which the world can neither give nor take away.’ The pages of his later Journal are full of bursts of joy and thankfulness ; and with his children and his chosen friends, his full heart welled out ever in the same blessed strains ; he seemed too happy not to express his happiness ; his ‘song was ever of the loving-kindness of the Lord.’ ”

The following illustration of this same spirit of overflowing love is furnished by a friend who accompanied him into the country : A large number of friends were gathered in a festive scene—a school *fête*. “He,” proceeds the memorandum, “was all sunshine at such times, from principle as well as habit. .

‘It is,’ he would say, ‘a fault to be silent ; every one is bound to present his contribution to the common stock of conversation and enjoyment ;’ and wherever the group was most crowded and attentive, he was sure to be found its center. From all this he stole away,” proceeds the same narrator, “and asked me to walk with him down the village. It was to visit a poor woman, of whom he had heard as in a deep decline. He found out the sick-room, and sat down by the bed, and began to speak to her of the love of God, which should dwell in his children’s hearts. ‘Ask yourself, then, Do you love Him ? We know how love to our fellow-creatures acts : how it makes us try to please them, bear for their sakes unpleasant or unkind things, pain or hard words, with patience ; now does your love to God act in this way ? Do you bear patiently what he sends you, *because* he sends it ? It is no proof of love to God to do what pleases us : to come, for instance, as I have done to-day, to see all those dear children in

the company of those I love. But if you submit to your illness, and give up your will to God's will ; if you will seek to listen to His voice in affliction ; if you are patient under your sufferings, and gentle to those about you, this will indeed be a proof of love to God. And then think of the happy consequence. He will come and abide with you, and bring such peace and joy into your heart as nothing else can bestow. The Comforter will come and dwell with you, not pay you a short visit, as I am paying to my friends here, but dwell with you, and never leave you. Now this is the joy I wish for you.' And then he knelt down and asked of God to comfort and support her, and after all her sufferings bring her to a world of peace and joy, where the former things shall have passed away. 'It is delightful,' said he, as we returned, 'to visit such a bed of sickness, to be able to take one ray of joy from the full sunshine of the social circle to gild her sick-room. It has been one of the happiest days I ever spent.'"

XVIII.

Christophe of Hayti.

“I HAVE often wished,” wrote Mr. Wilberforce to one of his sons, toward the close of his life, “to do a little justice to poor Christophe. I possess letters from him which would do him great honor. Perhaps they may form a chapter, if any memoranda of my own life and times are ever put together.”

Possibly some one may inquire, “And who was Christophe?” He was no other than the King of Hayti, enjoying at that time the exercise of royal power over the inhabitants of that beautiful island of the tropic seas. He is declared by Mr. Wilberforce to have been truly “a great man.” In the eventful history of St. Domingo, his name has a share. Christophe was born a slave. Raised

by the force of his own genius, aided by concurring events, to absolute power, he was desirous of using that power to promote the highest good of the people. In accomplishing this work he sought the aid and advice of the English advocate for African freedom. The correspondence that ensued was lengthened, and of singular interest. To change the habits of the people, to enlighten them by means of schools and colleges, and the introduction of English literature, and finally of the English language and religion, were the favorite projects of the monarch. For these purposes he not only requested direction, but remitted considerable sums of money. He wished to change the character of the people, declaring, in forcible language, of the French habits and prevalent customs, that "the Haytians must have nothing in common with a nation from whom they had suffered so much."

"He has requested me," wrote Wilberforce to his friend Stephen, "to get for him seven

schoolmasters, a tutor for his son, and seven different professors for a royal college which he intends to found. Among these are a classical professor, a medical, a mathematical, and a pharmaceutical chemist."

Mr. Wilberforce entered warmly into these views. "How I wish," he wrote to Mr. Macaulay, "that I were not too old, and you not too busy to go. It would be a noble undertaking, to be sowing in such a soil the seeds of Christian and moral improvement, and to be laying also the foundation of all kinds of social and domestic institutions, habits and manners." "It produces quite a youthful glow through my whole frame," he writes to another, "to witness before I die, in this, and so many other instances, the streaks of moral and religious light illuminating the horizon, and, though now but the dawning of the day, cheering us with hopes of their meridian glories."

These feelings were warmly shared. "Were I five-and-twenty," Sir Joseph Banks wrote

to him, asking him for Haytian information, "as I was when I embarked with Captain Cook, I am very sure that I should not lose a day in embarking for Hayti. To see a set of human beings emerging from slavery, and making most rapid strides toward the perfection of civilization, must, I think, be the most delightful of all food for contemplation."

But to find the right persons for Hayti was not an easy thing. It was no light service that had been undertaken. "I have succeeded," he writes, "in finding a physician, but I still want a surgeon, and much more a divine. What would I give for a clergyman, who should be just such as I could approve."

The attention of Christophe had been called, in the course of the correspondence, to the education of the women of Hayti. Their elevation and refinement would be urged by Mr. Wilberforce, next to Christianity, the most powerful means of improving the peo-

ple. With these views Christophe heartily concurred, and teachers were provided for this end. That persons for these various offices were chosen with the greatest care, we have reason to believe. A shrewd observer of character, Mr. Wilberforce at one time records his receiving at his house the volunteers for Hayti, not merely for a transient interview, but that "they might stay with me a few days, and enable me the better to take their dimensions."

Notwithstanding all the caution that could be used in selecting these, for the various departments of labor, some proved unworthy and others unsuitable. Some were unequal to the trial of sustaining a proper character in a community so degraded, that vice was no way disgraceful ; and others of better principles, by their desponding letters increased the burden of care. These seem, however, to have been regarded as by no means affording ground for discouragement. The hopeful spirit of Wilberforce still perse-

vered strongly in the work of enlightening the subjects of Hayti.

The secret spring of these labors, and indeed of his abolition efforts also, may be found in a letter to Mr. Stephen, written some years before, under a different aspect of affairs, but not on that account losing its value. "I greatly fear," he writes, "that if Hayti gives to France a colonial monopoly, in return for the recognition of its independence, that all commerce with us will be excluded, and with it our best hopes of introducing true religion into the island. Now, I will frankly own to you, that to introduce religion appears to me the greatest of all benefits. I blame myself for not having earlier stated to you my principles on this head. It has arisen from a want of reflection, for my principles have been always the same. God grant we may not hinder the gospel of Christ. O ! remember that the salvation of one soul is of more worth than the mere temporal happiness of thousands, or even millions. In

this I well know that you agree with me entirely."

"I am occupied, I trust," he says at another time, "in preparing an entrance into Africa for the Gospel of Christ. I must say that I account it one of the greatest of the many and great mercies and favors of the Almighty (oh how many and how great!) that his Providence connected me with this good cause."

We return now to Haytian affairs. After what has been stated of these labors, it is not strange to find entries in his diary like this : "I have been excessively busy of late, and in the line of duty. But my devotional time has been too much broken in upon ; and this must not be. Much harassed by applications for recommendations to Hayti, by people from whom I know nothing." The machinery of these movements had become complicated, and persons were to be chosen for all grades of labor and from all ranks of life, from pro-

fessors for the royal college, tutors and governesses for the royal household, to "two ploughmen and their ploughs and families."

A sudden stop was put to all these labors by the death of Christophe. He alone had set these plans for improvement on foot, and with him they fell to the ground. "I can not mention Hayti," writes Mr. Wilberforce, who was much distressed at the event, "without interposing a word concerning this same *tyrant*, as, now that he is fallen, it is the fashion to call Christophe. If he did deserve that name, then it is compatible with the warmest desire in a sovereign for the improvement and happiness of his people ; and I must also add, that all the authentic accounts I ever heard of him have led me to believe that he was really a great man, with but few infirmities. Nevertheless, I am not much surprised at what has taken place, for I must confess that the yoke of government might probably press heavily upon his people, and that he might carry his whole system,

both in introducing improvements and in reforming morals, with too much rigor." "He has been charged, as far as I know, with only two faults ; one, an over strict enforcement of justice ; the other, his being avaricious, and heaping together much money in his capital. But this was for the purpose of buying gunpowder from the Americans, in case the French should attack him. He sent me over six thousand pounds, to pay schoolmasters, etc. ; and I remember his giving a man, whose conduct he approved, one thousand dollars, quite spontaneously. He was a great man, intent on the improvement of his people ; but he furnishes a striking instance of the truth, that by too earnestly pursuing a good object, you directly defeat it."

XIX.

Past Public Efforts.

IMPAIRED health, and the effect of long-continued labors upon a constitution never robust, admonished Mr. Wilberforce that the days of his greatest activity were past. Yet were his parliamentary labors to be marked at their close by new conflicts in that cause to which he had given his early strength. Gradually had the case of the West Indian slaves, and the necessity of improving their condition, been, by the efforts of their friends, made apparent. In 1823, a decided progress was made. The views of the friends of the slave had become extended, and emancipation was now the end in view. They had come to this result, not by any abstract theory, but by the necessity of the case, and

the failure of every other effort of reform. The evil plant must be plucked up by the roots. To lop the branches ever so carefully, had been proved to be of no avail. An admirable pamphlet was published, not far from this time, by Mr. Clarkson, the old and unwearied friend of the cause, wherein he goes into the subject at large.

The time had, indeed, now arrived when that which had been in vain sought from colonial legislation must be won from the British Parliament. But the voice that formerly in trumpet tones had led on the conflict for justice and right, was enfeebled with age, and broken by reason of infirmity. The work must be given to younger hands. Yet serenely clear was the spirit's light within, where the presence of God dwelt as in a temple. He says of himself: "My lungs are affected, and my voice weak, so I am forced to keep the house." "I greatly regret I can not go, but I must accustom myself to be willing to retire." "A Christian, considering

himself the servant of God, does his Master's business so long as He signifies his will by action, and no less by retiring. I hope I have been acting on this principle, applying, he must increase, but I must decrease to other and younger men. And oh, may I be enabled to walk by faith, not sight; and then all will be clear and easy and not unpleasant. How cheering is the consideration that all events are under the guidance of infinite wisdom and goodness, and that we are hastening to a world of secure peace and joy."

The position he had formerly occupied in the House as the acknowledged leader in the African cause, he now transferred to T. F. Buxton, Esq. With reference to the changed aspect of things, he remarks: "God can effect his own purposes by his own agents as he will. 'They also serve who only stand and wait!'"

Yet by other means he was still active. That the subject must be brought before Parliament by no other than himself, was the

judgment of those interested. He was therefore urged to record and publish his opinions on the state of the negro slaves. This he did. In March was published his "Appeal to Religion, Justice, and Humanity." In this pamphlet his fervor of spirit was so tempered with the wisdom of age, and the beautiful candor and the spirit of justice which distinguished him, as to carry itself to the hearts of those who read. "Its perusal," said a West Indian proprietor, "has so affected me, that should it cost me my whole property, I surrender it willingly, that my poor negroes may be brought not only to the liberty of Europeans, but, especially, to the liberty of Christians."

At the close of the session of Parliament, during which the West Indian subject had been fairly opened by Mr. Buxton, Wilberforce retired into the country. Again another sitting called him to London; but at this time his life was endangered from an attack of inflammation of the lungs. This

period of illness is thus detailed by his biographer: "His perfect patience, and the continual bursts of love and thankfulness which were ever breaking forth throughout this season of restlessness and langor, can never be forgotten by those who watched with the deepest anxiety beside the sick bed of such a father. 'No man,' he would say, 'has been more favored than I, for even when I am ill, my complaints occasion little suffering.'"

With reference to the "great affection borne him by his family," he wrote in reply to Mr. Babington, who had expressed his pleasure at observing it. "No physician can devise, and no money can purchase such a restorative to a sick man."

"It would indeed," continues his son, "be strange had it been otherwise. He was beloved in general society; but if he sparkled there, he shone at home. None but his own family could fully know the warmth of his heart, or the unequalled sweetness of his temper."

This illness was during the session of Parliament, from which he was absent eight weeks. His departure from London was followed by another severe attack. Recovering in some degree from this, he lived necessarily in much seclusion. The time had now arrived when he must retire from the scene of his labors. For the press of business, the strife of debate, his decayed strength was no longer equal.

Arrangement was suggested, by the kindness of a friend, that would have removed him to the Upper House. To this he replied: "To your friendly suggestion, respecting changing the field of my parliamentary labors, I must say a word or two, premising that I do not intend to continue in public life longer than the present Parliament. I will not deny that there have been periods in my life when, on worldly principles, the attainment of a permanent, easy, and quiet seat in the legislature would have been a pretty strong temptation to me. But I thank

God, I was strengthened against yielding to it. For, (understand me rightly,) as I had done nothing to make it naturally come to me, I must have endeavored to go to it ; and this would have been carving for myself, if I may use the expression, much more than a Christian ought to do."

In connection with this remarkable letter, we touch once more upon the question, why was not Wilberforce long before raised to a peerage, ennobled by parchments and ribbons, honored by a title, etc.? Simply because his choice was otherwise. He must in this matter be believed to be sincere. In a private document he alludes to "the injury done to the credit and character of the House of Commons by numerous peerages that were granted to men who had no public claims to such a distinction." These persons, in short, served the existing administration, and were paid for it. He says: "In this connection *an example therefore appeared to me to be required of an opposite kind.*" This he truly

says, "could not be exhibited more properly than in the instance of one, who, having been some time member for the greatest county in England, and being also the personal intimate of the Prime Minister, might be supposed likely, if he had made the endeavor, to succeed in obtaining the object of his wishes."

Surely this paragraph sets the question beyond a doubt.

His final retirement was made with regret. He "regretted that he had done so little." When congratulated on the achievements of his preëminently useful life, his unaffected humbleness of mind dictated the reply: "The heart knows its own bitterness. We alone know ourselves, and the opportunities we have enjoyed, and the comparative use we have made of them."

This was by no means the result of a habit of depreciating himself, for even in this he speaks discriminately, and says: "I should not speak truly if I were to charge my par-

liamentary life with sins of commission. I can call God to witness that I always spoke and voted according to my conscience, for the public and not for my own private interest." Yet in immediate connection with this he alludes to "opportunities of good inadequately improved."

Ah who, save One, ever dwelt on earth that might not make this charge his own !

It was not possible for such a man to pass from public life without observation and testimonials of regard.

The charms of his genius thousands had acknowledged—to the power of his eloquence thousands could attest. One well qualified to judge esteemed him as the "most efficient speaker in the House of Commons." Pitt himself repeatedly declared, "Of all the men I ever knew, Wilberforce has the greatest natural eloquence." Says another who was accustomed to listen to him, and also to record his own impressions received at the time : "Wilberforce held a high and conspic-

uous place in oratory, even at a time when English eloquence rivaled whatever we read of in Greece or Rome. His voice itself was beautiful : deep, clear, articulate, flexible. I think his greatest efforts were made for the abolition of the trade in slaves, and in supporting some of the measures brought forward by Pitt, or for the more effectual suppression of revolutionary machinations ; but he often rose unprepared in mixed debate, on the impulse of the moment, and seldom sat down without having struck into that higher tone of general reasoning and vivid illustration, which left on his hearers the impression of power beyond what the occasion had called forth."

Such a man could not retire from public life without much observation from the public at large, and much sympathy from those who knew him best.

One extract closes this period. It is from a letter to a friend. After speaking in glow-

ing language of the "full harvest" younger men might live to see, from "the good seed now sowing—let me check," he continues, "this random sally of the imagination ; and for you, though much younger than me, as well as for myself, let me recollect that we may humbly hope, through the infinite mercies of our God and Saviour, to behold all the joys and glories that I have been anticipating for the generations to come, and to behold them from a higher elevation, and through a purer medium. We are not told that Moses was to experience, after death, any thing different from mankind in general, and yet we know that he took part in the events of this lower world, and on the Mount of Transfiguration talked with Christ concerning his death, which he was to undergo at Jerusalem. And I love, my dear friend, to dwell on this idea, that after our departure from the scene of our earthly pilgrimage, we shall witness the development of the plans we may have formed for the benefit of our fellow-creatures ; the growth

and fruitage of the good principles we have implanted and cultivated in our children ; and, above all, the fulfillment of the prayers we have poured forth for them, in the large effusions on them of that heavenly grace which, above all things, we have implored as their portion. It is almost, I fear, to touch too tender a string, but there is one in my breast also which vibrates in exact unison with yours." Here, in allusion to those who have departed, he touches most tenderly upon the idea that they are still aware of all that happens to those they loved on earth. "I must no longer trespass on my slender stock of eyesight, but say farewell."

XX.

Retirement and Death.

THE public life of Mr. Wilberforce having closed, he determined to go into retirement altogether. With this end in view, he purchased a residence at Highwood Hill, about ten miles from London. He did not, however, take immediate possession, but remained for a time at Uxbridge. In view of the changes of life, he writes: "May I be enabled more and more to walk, during the years which may yet remain for me, in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. May I walk with God in my closing years, and then where, is of little consequence."

Still he was surrounded by a circle of friends. It had been remarked by one of these that "Mr. Wilberforce would create

society in a desert." Insensibly his conversation, at this time, was wont to slide into recollections of past times. The great men and great events of a former day passed in review before him, and his visitors listened with delight to the rich descriptions, the breathing pictures which the "old man eloquent" was wont to unroll, one by one, before them.

In June, 1826, he took possession of his Highwood home. This is marked by the following entry in his Journal: "Late when I got home, and had a too hasty prayer for first settlement in a new house—all in confusion."

Two distinguished persons at a dinner at a friend's house, when the doctrine of a particular Providence was discussed, expressed their belief in it "on great occasions." Of this he remarks in his Journal: "As unphilosophical as it is unscriptural—must not the smallest links be as necessary for maintaining the continuity as the greatest? Great and little belong to our littleness; but there is no great and little to God."

Though retired, he deprecated the idea of being useless. Though his usual pursuits had ceased, he was, from principle as well as habit, in no danger of contracting the rust of idleness. His days were very regularly spent. He had still his correspondence, his charities, the duties of hospitality, the pursuits of literature. His love of books had by no means lessened with age. His constitutional weakness of sight had always been unfavorable to close application, but he had acquired the habit of mastering the contents of a book by a sort of rapid glancing through its pages, and thus appropriating its pith and marrow more rapidly than many a laborious reader.

But for a vivid sketching of these days, we quote the description of one of his friends :*

“The picture which the dead leave on the minds of the survivors is not always lively or distinct. Although we may have fondly loved them, and may hallow the memory of their good qualities, we can not always summon

* Familiar Sketch by J. J. Gurney.

their image before us ; but I venture to express my conviction that no one who has been accustomed to observe Wilberforce, will ever find the slightest difficulty in picturing him on the tablet of the mind. Who that knew him can fail to recall the rapid movements of his somewhat diminutive form, the illumination of his expressive countenance, and the nimble finger with which he used to seize on every little object which happened to adorn or diversify his path ? Much less can we forget his vivacious wit, so playful, yet so harmless ; the glow of his affections ; the urbanity of his manners, and the wondrous celerity with which he was wont to turn from one bright thought to another. Above all, however, his friends will never cease to remember that peculiar sunshine which he threw over a company by the influence of a mind perpetually tuned to love and praise. I am ready to think there could be no greater luxury than that of roaming with him in solitude over green fields and gardens, and

drawing out of his treasury things new and old.

“This was most true of his hour of daily exercise. Who that ever joined him in it can not see him as he walked round his garden at Highwood? Now in animated and even playful conversation, and then drawing from his copious pockets (to contain Dalrymple’s state papers was the standard measure) some favorite volume or other—a Psalter, a Horace, a Shakspeare or Cowper, and reading and reciting, or ‘refreshing’ passages, and then catching at long-stored flower-leaves as the wind blew them from the pages, or standing before a favorite gum-cistus to repair the loss. Then he would point out the harmony of the tints, the beauty of the penciling, the perfection of the coloring, and run up all into those ascriptions of praise to the Almighty that were ever welling forth from his grateful heart. He loved flowers with all the simple delight of childhood. He would hover from bed to bed over his favorites; and when he

came in, even from the shortest walk, deposited a few that he had gathered safely in his room before he joined the breakfast-table. Often would he say, as he enjoyed their fragrance, "How good is God to us! What should we think of a friend who had furnished us with a magnificent house and all we needed, and then coming in to see that all had been provided according to his wishes, should be hurt that no scents had been placed in the rooms? Yet so has God dealt with us. Surely flowers are the smiles of his goodness."

Says another visitor: "His figure is now in my mind—his benevolent eye, his kind, considerate manner of speaking, his reverence for Scripture, his address, the pauses he made in his walk when he had any thing emphatic to say. I recollect one sentiment was, that the passages so frequent in Scripture importing the unwillingness of the Almighty that the sinner should perish, the invitations addressed to him to return, the remonstrances with him on his unbelief, etc., must be interpreted

strictly and literally, or they would appear to be a mockery of man's misery, and to involve the most fearful imputations on the Divine character. Evasions of the force of such passages were, he thought, highly injurious, and went to sap the whole evidence and bearing of the Christian revelation.

“Of his benevolence I need not speak ; but his kind construction of doubtful actions, his charitable language toward those from whom he most widely differed, his thorough forgetfulness of little affronts, were fruits of that general benevolence which continually appeared. The nearer you observed him, the more the habit of his mind appeared obviously to be modest and lowly. He was in as little measure as possible elated by the love and esteem of almost the whole civilized world, which, long before his death, had been accorded him. It required some management to draw him out in conversation, and therefore some of those who saw him only once might go away disappointed. But if he

was lighted up, and in a small circle, his powers of conversation were prodigious—a natural eloquence was poured out, strokes of gentle playfulness and satire fell on all sides, and the company were soon absorbed in admiration.”

Says another visitor, who writes from Highwood Hill: “I wish I could send you something of what I have heard in the beautifully simple explanations that he gives every day of a chapter that he reads from the New Testament. Then if you could hear him reading, as he does, the poems from the ‘Christian Year!’ I shall have much to tell you, at some future time, of sentiments and ideas of his, all so beautiful, and so true, and so indulgent—for I think nothing more striking in him than that spirit of general benevolence which governs all he says, joined to the extreme beauty of his voice. It does indeed make him appear ‘to love whatever he speaks of.’”

Among his numerous charities, it had always been a favorite one to assist young

men of promise. Foremost of these stands the name of Kirke White. Mr. Wilberforce was one of the first who appreciated and aided this unfortunate child of genius. In his busiest days, too, it had been his custom to invite to his home those who were preparing for religious usefulness, and by conversation to learn their capacities and predilections. Often, by a well-timed direction, a suggestive word, a tone, even, of encouragement or admonition, was he able to change the color of their doctrines. Now, however, that his absorbing cares were laid aside, he carried this manner of doing good further than before, by taking some of those he assisted home beneath his roof, defraying the expenses of their education, and devoting hours of his time to their improvement. In holidays these favored youth, absent at school, came home to the hospitable roof and the welcome that awaited them there, encouraged and blessed by the sunshine that constantly rested upon its inmates. Nor were the neighboring poor forgotten. Sought

out in their cottage homes, they received, according as they needed, instruction or relief, and duly on Sabbath evenings were invited to join in worship with the family and the guests of Wilberforce.

The erection of a chapel at Highwood, there being no church within three miles, occasioned much care, and gave rise to some annoying circumstances ; and the mention of this brings us to the record of unforeseen calamity. In the serenity of this beautiful retirement we might feel disposed to leave the venerated subject of this memorial, until the voice from heaven should call to his servant, "Come up hither." But change and vicissitudes end not till man himself is changed from this mortal to immortality. Trials came in the unwonted form of pecuniary depression.

Some years before retiring from public life, Mr. Wilberforce wrote thus to one of his sons, then at college :

"On the topic of money, it may become ne-

cessary, I fear, for me to speak to all my children. This returning so hastily to a metallic currency, a subject on which your master [the Bishop of Llandaff] has written with the pen of a political economist of no ordinary ability, has so suddenly increased the value of money, and brought down the prices of all raw produce, that our farmers are gradually falling into ruin, and I shall be very glad, indeed, if lowering my rents twenty-five per cent. (and they were always ordered to be fixed on fair and moderate terms) will enable my tenants to pay me the remainder. Yet, to a man who, like me, has never designedly saved any thing, such a diminution of revenue, a fourth, is not very convenient ; but certainly we must all learn and practice economy."

This was written at a time when his family were most expensive ; moreover, the twenty-five per cent. ultimately became changed to thirty-seven, making a deduction of more than a third from his yearly income.

His expenditure had always been liberal. Yet, for his public station and rank in life, his style of living had never been sumptuous. "You can do as you please," said one, himself a dispenser of luxurious banquets, "for people come to hear you talk." He himself speaks of his habits being "a less expensive table, less costly furniture," than others of similar fortune ; and adds, "as a consequence, I was able to act with a generosity from which, I am sure, had mere self-gratification been my object, I should have been abundantly recompensed." But his hospitalities, as we have seen, were almost unbounded ; so much so, that for the solitude necessary to rigid application, he was accustomed to sojourn at the mansion of some familiar friend, hidden, as it were, for the time, from interruption. Of his charities we have already spoken, and will only add a short extract from a letter to his oldest son. "I never intended to do more than not to exceed my income, Providence having placed me in

a situation in which my charities were necessarily large. But, believe me, there is a special blessing in being liberal to the poor, and on the family of those who have been so ; and I doubt not my children will fare better even in this world, for real happiness, than if I had been saving twenty or thirty thousand pounds of what has been given away."

In addition to the reduction of income, which we have mentioned, we must record the failure of an extensive farming speculation, entered into for the benefit of one of his sons. The loss of capital was so great as to render retrenchment necessary. It was thought best to give up the mansion at Highwood.

That Mr. Wilberforce felt this calamity keenly, we have evidence ; but that it affected in any degree his cheerful and serene spirit, does not appear. Just after this, we find a pleasant notice of a renewal of intercourse with one long known, Sir James Macintosh, whom he now met frequently. He

says in his Journal, "Macintosh came in, and sat most kindly chatting with me at dinner. What a paragon of a companion he is, quite unequalled!"

To this we can not but add the pleasant account of this intercourse, given by Macintosh himself. "Do you remember Madame de Maintenon's exclamation, 'Oh, the misery of having to amuse an old king, *qui n'est pas amusable* !' Now, if I were called upon to describe Wilberforce in one word, I should say he was the most 'amusable' man I ever met with in my life. Instead of having to think what subject will interest him, it is impossible to hit upon one that will not. I never saw any one who touched life at so many points ; and this is the more remarkable in a man who is supposed to be absorbed in the contemplation of a future state. When he was in the House of Commons, he seemed to have the freshest mind of any man there. There was all the charm of youth about him. And he is quite as remarkable in this bright

evening of his days, as when I saw him in his glory many years ago."

The hidden springs of this beautiful serenity, at an age when the natural spirits may be expected to decay, can be found only in the harmony of his soul with the divine government, and a clear perception of the divine goodness and love.

These pecuniary losses were followed by a trial of a tenderer nature—the death of his surviving daughter. "Blessed be God," he says, during her illness, "we have reason to be thankful for the state of mind we witness in her ; a holy, humble reliance on her Saviour, enables her to enter the dark valley with Christian hope, leaning, as it were, on her Redeemer's arm, and supported and cheered by the promises of the Gospel. We are in the hands of our heavenly Father, and I am sure no one has hitherto had such reason as myself to say that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days."

Removing from Highwood, he became a

resident with his sons. The tender reverence which these bore him as a parent, seems to have been equaled only by their admiring love for his genius and character. That his altered circumstances had had the effect to bring him nearer to his children, he records with much satisfaction. "Here," he says, writing from one of these residences, "we have the delightful spectacle of those whom we love most, enjoying a large measure of human life's sweetest enjoyments, combined with the diligent discharge of its highest duties." An additional joy was granted him in this evening of life ; the pure and overflowing delight that springs from the presence of happy childhood. Of this he says, "What a manifest benevolence there is in the Almighty's having rendered young children so eminently attractive, considering the degree in which their very existence must depend on the disposition of those around them, to bear with their little infirmities, sustain their weakness, and supply their wants."

“The details of his life at his parsonage residences,” says one of his sons, “were much what they had been of late at Highwood, except that greater quietness gave him more time for reading, and for those devotional habits which manifestly grew with his increasing years, in which he found the Psalms and St. Paul’s Epistles becoming more and more dear to him.”

“His early walk, and his mid-day employments, remained unaltered, and in the afternoon he still took, as heretofore, considerable exercise ; pacing at East Farleigh, during the winter, up and down a ‘sheltered, sunny, gravel walk ;’ and, in the summer, climbing with delight at Brighton to the top of the chalk downs, or of an intermediate terrace, or walking along an unfrequented shore.”

“His evenings were now as bright as ever, and though his power of retaining new ideas was greatly impaired, the colors of his earlier impressions seemed scarcely to fade.”

“He now never met a friend of earlier

days, and whose principles were different from his own (and such he took great pains to see), without following up their intercourse with a friendly letter on their most important interests, pressing mainly on them that it was not yet too late for them to make the better choice. ‘This is what they need,’ he repeated often ; ‘they get to think they are in for it, and that though they have chosen ill, it is too late to alter.’ ”

This encouraging spirit, in the exertion of religious influence, he cultivated from principle, fearing that in the earlier and less assured and settled Christian hopes that had marked his own history, he had betrayed to others a state of mind with regard to themselves, that savored of discouragement. This, in the calmer light of more matured piety, more entire and trusting love, he strove to correct. “At all events,” said one, at the close of a religious conversation, “if you are right, it is now too late for me to alter. I am in for it.” “No,” he answered earnestly,

“my dear P., it is not too late. Only attend to these things, and you will find it true, ‘he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.’”

Though for two years he had quite given up the thought that he should ever speak in public again, he was induced, on the 12th of April, 1833, to propose at a meeting, in the town of Maidstone, a petition against slavery. “It was,” says his biographer, “an affecting sight to see the old man, who had been so long the champion of this cause, come forth once more from his retirement, and with an unquenched spirit, though with a weakened voice and failing body, maintain for the last time the cause of truth and justice.”

There was now no doubt but the entire abolition of negro slavery in the British dominions would soon take place. The principle of compensation to the owners was, however, in debate. On this point his opinions were decided. All, he contended, who should actually suffer loss, should be duly re-

munerated. The proposal, therefore, of a grant of twenty millions for this purpose, met his approval, and he had no hesitation in giving to this measure the weight of his opinion.

This was his last appearance in public. His strength now visibly declined. We must follow him now down those declining paths that lead to the valley of shadows, yet where, to the eye of faith, rest evermore rays of heavenly brightness. A solemn and intense spirituality mark this period. The soul dwelt consciously on the borders of infinity. The world behind, and eternity before, the mind's eye looked calmly upon both. The attitude is sublimely Christian. That collected survey of his state, that complete consciousness of his approaching change, that absence of exciting disease, that gradual decay of the natural flow of spirits, reveal the soul with no resource save as it joins itself, by an act of deliberate faith, to the Eternal. In that deep touching humility, that untroubled

trust in God, we see the fitting end of a life such as we have endeavored to portray. In the so great nearness to the spiritual world, that it almost ceases to be a thing of anticipation, the soul having already made the principles and sentiments of that purer state its own, we find the highest form of Christian development. Mostly in words of thankfulness and praise, do the emotions of the dying now find expression. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication make known your requests to God." "The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

He was removed to Bath for the benefit of the waters, by which, on former occasions, he had been so much strengthened. After some time it was thought advisable to remove to London. He had, in 1824, derived great benefit from the skill of Dr. Chambers. He had himself, however, no expectation of being restored. "There is no one now," he said, "that I can be useful to ; but we should

always be trying to follow, in every respect, God's indicated will."

He was removed to London to die. The next day he expressed himself "very anxious to dedicate the short remainder of time God might yet allot him, to the cultivation of union with Christ, and to the acquiring of more of his spirit."

At this time Parliament was still in session, and many of his old friends flocked around him. "What cause for thankfulness," he exclaimed, "that God has always disposed people to treat me so kindly."

It was a singular coincidence of circumstances that he had come to London at that particular point of time. The Bill for the Abolition of Slavery had reached its second reading in the House of Commons, and the last public information that he received was, that his country was willing to redeem itself from the national disgrace at any sacrifice. "Thank God," said he, "that I shall have lived to witness a day, in which England is

willing to give twenty millions sterling for the abolition of slavery."

This was his last recognition of public affairs. And so ended his career. His old friends gaining, as his waning strength permitted, admittance to his bedside, to gaze once more upon his familiar face, to catch once more the accents of his voice—his name, meanwhile, a watchword of liberty and glory in the councils of the nation. Calmly he passed away—his weakness sustained by eternal strength, his decay opening the entrance to eternal life. On the morning of July 9th, 1833, an old servant drew him out in a wheel-carriage. He looks once more on the green earth and smiling sky—he converses as with renovated powers; the spirit, the grace, the animation of former days is not yet gone; he offers up the family prayer with marked fervor of religious affection; he appears stronger than before. It was but the sudden flaming up of the candle in its socket. It was "the last of earth."

A succession of fainting fits followed. If he had survived it would have been but as a wreck. Heaven in mercy spared the survivors that grief—the beholding of that brilliant intellect beclouded, that benignly speaking eye bereft of the light of thought. With one expression of humble trust, with one groan at the severance of the soul from its familiar tabernacle, the freed one passed from the circling embrace of earthly love to the presence of his Redeemer.

In the last resting place of so many of the noble dead, in the north transept of Westminster Abbey, hard by the tombs of his old companions, Pitt, and Fox, and Canning, may be found the name of WILBERFORCE.

THE END.